Returned from the Dead Letter Office

Canadian DLO returned letter covering envelopes & wrappers to 1954

Introduction

This is a pseudo-virtual exhibit; *pseudo-* because it is intended to be printed (with real covers, not the scans) as an exhibit. I put it in this virtual form in order to expose it to criticism before I mount the pages, and also to see just what I have, what I need, and what I can dispose of.

There are undoubtedly many errors and omissions of fact, some page arrangements could be improved, the organization likely leaves something to be desired, the story line might be obscure, ... Some of the material could be upgraded, too. I hope readers will send comments, criticisms, and suggestions (e-mail address below)—this is the main point of putting it on-line.

I am also interested in buying or trading for material that would fit in.

The scans are 150dpi, very low resolution, hence some of the images look a lot worse than the covers really are (and the appearance of some is considerably improved). This is another reason to call this *pseudo-*virtual. Had I intended to make this a real virtual (!) exhibit, I would have scanned at 300dpi. Many of the side images are in greyscale, as these are intended to be printed (as I intend to use a bw printer), and I will have to convert the coloured side images to greyscale as well. The images of the covers are within ±5% of their actual size, or so I hope.

The index lists page numbers starting with the title page (page 1).

This was prepared in the typesetting language TEX (but *not* straitjacket LATEX). The font family is ITC Elysium. When text overlaps an image, it means that the cover will be mounted to the left of where it is shown.

David Handelman, Ottawa, August 2011
rochelle2@sympatico.ca

February 2012: modified slightly and incorporated a few new items.

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Synopsis

The Canadian Dead Letter Office (DLO) was instituted around 1830, and was based on the well-established British Dead Letter Office. Its job was to deal with letters that could not be delivered. Initially, all undeliverable mail was sent to the DLO; later on, this was restricted to undeliverable mail with no visible return address.

At the DLO, mail was opened in order to determine return addresses. If one were found, the envelope would be returned to sender in a *covering envelope* or (earlier) *covering wrapper.* These are sometimes referred to as *ambulance* covers, but we will not use this inaccurate term here. The exhibit deals with covering wrappers and envelopes (with one exception, an 1863 cover), integrated with other aspects of postal history.

For example, registered dead letters were returned registered (initially with an extra fee, which was soon dropped), while if an item of value were found in a dead non-registered letter, the covering envelope would be returned with compulsory registration, the extra fee being charged to the sender. Covering envelopes were also used to return wreck covers, some postage due covers, and letters to destinations to which service was suspended during wartime, among others.

Organization The first subdivision is into five sections: pre-Confederation, 1868–1898 (Post-Confederation to formation of branch offices), 1898–1954 (DLO branches and districts), Oddities, and Foreign DLO covering envelopes to Canada. *Pre-Confederation* is slightly inaccurate, in that the section covers the period up to the March/April 1868 wholesale rate and procedural changes. The 1898–1954 section deals with decentralization: DLO branches, then districts, were created, and ends with the establishment of the Undeliverable Mail Office (1954).

The *Oddities* section concerns a variety of different phenomena, such as compulsory registration (of the covering envelopes—that is, the registration fee was added to the amount due, a rare but easily explained phenomenon), returned wreck covers, returned for war tax, ... The final (brief) section, *Foreign* . . . deals with the analogous service performed by foreign counterparts, on mail to be returned to Canada.

Pre-Confederation Upper and Lower Canada's DLO was established around 1830 (likely the same applies to those of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick). As the capital moved around, the DLO moved around but with a shift typically of several years: for example, although Kingston replaced Quebec as capital in 1841, the DLO remained in Quebec until at least 1844, when the capital moved to Montreal. The earliest known covering wrappers from Montreal are seen in 1847 and continue to 12 May 1851, even though Toronto became the capital of the Province of Canada in 1849, and the Canada assumed control of its post office 6 April 1851. The earliest covering wrappers from Toronto are dated 17 May 1851.

In 1852, a 1d service charge was implemented. Sometime in 1853–1855, covering wrappers were re-

placed by covering envelopes (UK made the switch in 1853; although Canada's post office was autonomous, it likely followed their lead). Unfortunately, there are no known examples of Canadian returned letter covering envelopes used in the period 1857–1868. We do however show an important 1863 cover providing evidence that (a) the return service was in operation during the interregnum and (b) the return service charge was 5¢ (presumably this was in effect from 1859). This may be viewed as a space-filler until a returned letter covering envelope used in the period 1857–1867 turns up.

In this period, all dead letters (even if they had a visible return address) were returned to the DLO.

There are very few examples known of covering wrappers or envelopes in the pre-Confederation era. Every such that is shown here is known in at most five examples, and some are unique. The only known covering wrapper with its enclosure is shown. The uncut double wrapper (Toronto, 1851; used for a heavy or multiple enclosure) shows how they were printed (recto-verso). The cross-border form wrapper (1853), for items returned from the US, is unique. Two of the three known *covering envelopes* in this period appear. An 1863 space-filler (a returned letter, but not a returned letter covering envelope) shows that at least the return service was in operation, and the charge was 5¢.

Some other provinces used the same scheme. Two of the three reported Nova Scotia (1831 & 1846) and one of the two known New Brunswick (1851) covering wrappers appear; the thus far unique Nova Scotia covering envelope is also shown. I know of one Prince Edward Island covering wrapper (with enclosed dead letter), but I don't have it. I doubt that examples are known from British Columbia. Later in the exhibit, two covering envelopes from Newfoundland appear (1941 & 1946—these are pre-Confederation; it would have been incongruous to put them in this section), none are known from the nineteenth century.

The section concludes with a UK covering wrapper returning a dead letter to New Brunswick (1848). The wording outside and inside is almost identical to that of the Canadian examples—of course, the Canadian DLO was modelled on its British counterpart, even to the extent of using a handbook compiled by DLO employees in the UK.

1868–1898 (Post-Confederation to formation of branch offices) Following the general changes of the March/April 1868 postal act of Parliament, covering envelopes became increasingly well-regulated. Initially, they were inscribed with print data of the number issued and the date (it is not clear whether this is the date of the print order, or of the actual printing or release to offices). An alphanumeric code was instituted in 1876, to distinguish DLO form envelopesfrom those of other government offices.

The return service fee was 5¢ at the outset of this period, but dropped to 3¢ in 1875. Initially, if a registered letter were found to be dead, it would be returned to sender registered but with an additional 2¢ (domestic registration fee) charged to the sender. Some time in 1875–1878, the registration fee was dropped—so a registered dead letter would be returned in a registered covering envelope, but with no extra fee for registration. This policy continued until at least 1954. [*Conjecture*: the change took place when Canada adhered to the UPU in August 1878.]

As in the pre-Confederation period, there are a few examples wherein no service fee was applied. based on examples, letters that were sent free (e.g., to government offices within ten days of a parliamentary session), were returned free. From an early period, letters returned outside the country (typically the US) were not charged the service fee.

Covering envelopes in the early part of this period (to 1875) are almost as difficult to find as their pre-Confederation counterparts. Thereafter, they become increasingly less rare (although still quite difficult to find, even in the early twentieth century). Covering envelopes returned registered or still with their enclosure are extremely difficult to find (this applies even in later periods). Large covering envelopes (for the return of large or multiple envelopes) do not survive well, are printed in small quantities, and the few that can be found are usually brutally damaged. We show uses of all of these.

Among the highlights of this section are the very early examples, the large envelopes, and the Nova Scotia branch covering envelope (1871).

1898–1954 (DLO branches and districts) In 1898, branch DLOs were set up in various cities (and more created later), decentralizing the DLO from Ottawa. This creates a wide variety of postal history, as now we can examine covering envelopes from five (later, up to eight) cities. Postage due stamps were introduced (1906); there could then be used to indicate payment of the fee. Bilingual covering envelopes were not issued until the 1930s (more work should be done here). The section ends when the DLO is

converted to the UMO (1954). We continue the general policy of preferring returned covering envelopes that are registered or with enclosure.

Highlights include use of stamps to indicate payment of the fee (1902), the registered letter that wouldn't be returned (1915), the large registered covering envelope with enclosed letter, itself enclosing a substantial cheque (1923), and the erroneous & corrected bilingual covering envelopes (1944 & 1945).

Oddities This section includes a number of unusual returned letter phenomena.

Compulsory registration When a non-registered letter is found to contain an item of value, it is registered and the registration fee charged; if a dead non-registered letter were found to contain an item of value, the covering envelope containing it would be registration, and the registration fee added to the amount due. Notice how this differs from the handling of a dead letter that was already registered—this would be returned in a registered covering envelope, but there was no additional fee for registration (at least, after 1878). We show three examples of compulsorily registered returned covering envelopes, including one with the enclosed letter opened but not registered in UK.

Wreck mail Undeliverable mail that was recovered from a wreck was not subject to the return service fee, but postage may have to have been added by the DLO if it were returned to a foreign country. We show three examples from the *Empress of Ireland* (May 1914, although some covers were not returned until 1915) including one with enclosure, originally sent non-registered, but containing a money order. It was therefore registered by the DLO, with no charge to the recipient—this is an example of complimentary registration. We also have one of the few covers returned from the *Greenhill Park* explosion.

War tax When war tax was imposed in 1915, the normal procedure for underpaid covers was that the post office would sent a notice to either the sender or the addressee informing them of the deficiency, and asking them to send payment. Almost always, payment was sent, but if not, the item would be returned to sender in a DLO covering envelope. We show one example.

Wartime No service charge was applied when a letter to a soldier was returned owing to death; similarly, no charge applied if the letter was addressed to an occupied or enemy country, or if it enclosed postage stamps addressed abroad (even to a neutral country). We show covering envelopes with such enclosures.

Newfoundland Two examples, including a double enclosure, of Newfoundland covering envelopes.

Foreign return covering envelopes Three examples of foreign covering envelopes with enclosure to Canada, including a very early use of a Victoria branch DLO datestamp (1898), and a complicated itinerary (RCAF base in UK, to New Zealand, returned to UK, then to Canada) conclude the exhibit.

Constraints Many DLO form envelopes did *not* enclose returned letters (e.g., they contained notices of postage due). Thus I restricted the wrappers and covering envelopes to those about which we can be reasonably certain that they did contain a returned envelope. For example, this applies if there is printed wording RETURNED . . . LETTER, or if we have the enclosed letter itself (!). Late in the period of this exhibit, returned letter covering envelopes were not so inscribed, and in a few instances, I relied on postage due being consistent with return service fee and not with short payment.

Condition Most of these things are so difficult to find that condition is irrelevant.

Time period Earliest reported BNA covering wrapper (1831) to the formation of the UMO (1954).

There are four levels of headings (excluding the exhibit title)

Title

Subtitle

Subsubtitle

Subsubsubtitle (in-line) Practically all pages have a subsubtitle, and all descriptions of covers have a sub-subsubtitle.

Research & References I intend to update my 2000 article (*Returned letter wrappers from the dead letter office,* PHSC J, 104 (2000) 20–28, available on-line to PHSC members) on returned letter wrappers based on the

new material appearing in this exhibit. For the rest of the material, Brian Plain's *The Dead Letter Office in Canada, 1830–2002,* Auxano Philatelic Services (2003) is a fount of information. But there is more material I should report.

Index

Virtual exhibits should have an index, and in any case, it will be helpful when I revise the exhibit. Omitted from the index are terms that occur so frequently that it would be moronic to include them—for example, Ottawa, DLO, Montreal, Toronto, ... Page numbering begins at the title page (and goes beyond the exhibit–it includes items that didn't make the cut).

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Letters that with no return address that could not be delivered were normally sent to the Dead Letter Office (D L O), later the Undeliverable Mail Office (U M O), where they would be opened (for a return address), resealed, and placed in a *covering wrapper* or *covering envelope* to be returned. We deal with these covering envelopes for Canadian mail, from the beginning (ca 1830) until the formation of the U M O (1954).

Until 1852, wrappers were used, but very few have survived. Two covering envelopes are known mid-1850s, and nothing else is recorded up to April 1868, when Canada introduced its first post-Confederation postal act of Parliament. Service charges were imposed if the item was domestic, but not usually if it came from abroad (although any postage due on the item always had to be paid), and the rates were changed occasionally. If the original item were sent registered, the covering envelope that contained it was registered as well, at no extra charge.

Contents

An asterisk (*) means *worth a detour*; (**) means *unique or nearly so.*

Pre-Confederation [pp 2–18] *Different wrappers*: Quebec (1833, 1837, 1840–1843), with enclosed letter [unique]** (1843), Montreal (1847–1851), Toronto double uncut wrapper [unique]** (1851), service charge introduced Toronto (1852), cross-border wrapper [unique]** (1853). *Envelopes* [two of three recorded]** (1855). Nova Scotia wrappers [two of three known]** (1831 & 1846), Nova Scotia envelope [unique]**, New Brunswick [one of two known]** (1851), and UK wrapper returned to New Brunswick (1848).

1868–1897 [pp 19–39] Earliest *use* post-Confederation* (March 1869), earliest *printing* post-Confederation* (1872), with enclosure* (1871), Nova Scotia branch [unique]** (1871); fees reduced (1875), introduction of alphanumeric code in print data (1876), returned from US with enclosure (1888), returned free (1884, 1887, 1889), double enclosure* (1889), numerous registered (extra fee removed by 1878).

1898–1954 (DLO branches and districts) [pp 40–65] Ottawa with enclosure (1903), Montreal (1899), Halifax with numerals paying fee [unique]** (1902), Winnipeg registered* (1902), Edmonton (1914), postage due stamps introduced (from 1906), enclosure from US (1908), unreturnable registered* (1915), large registered with enclosure and *its* enclosure (1923), fee increase with anomalies (1922, 1925, 1925), Vancouver (1927 & 1930), enclosure from UK (1933), bilingual envelopes (1936), bilingual with error and corrected* (1944 & 1945), Regina & Calgary (1936 & 1942), enclosure from Australia* (1939), enclosure from UK (1947), changeover to U M O from D L O (1954).

Oddities [pp 66–77] *Compulsory registration*: odd fee* (1918), correct fee (1934), with enclosure* (1938). *Recovery from wrecks*: *Empress of Ireland* (1914 & 1915, latter registered in large envelope*), *Empress* complimentary registration and enclosure** (1915); *Greenhill Park** (1945). Returned for war tax enclosure* (1915). *War time*: soldier's letter (1917), early return of postage stamps (1939), service suspended (1940). Newfoundland (1941* & 1946).

Foreign DLO covering envelopes [pp 78–80] From UK (1898* & 1946), from New Zealand via UK (1946).

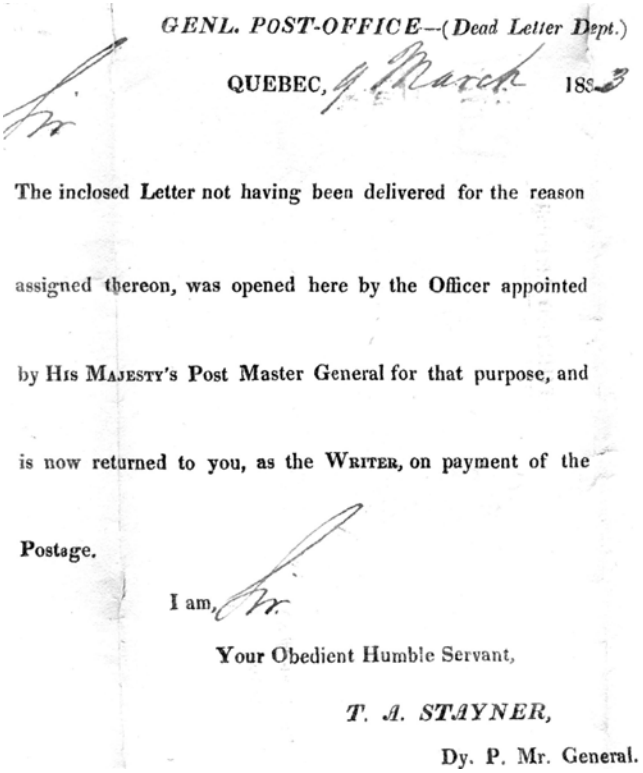
Pre-Confederation

A Dead Letter Office existed from 1830, normally located in the current or past capital of Upper and Lower Canada. Wrappers were used until ca 1853, then replaced by covering envelopes. There was no charge for returning dead letters (except that any amount due had to be paid by the sender) until ca 1852. Fewer than five examples are known of each of the different types of wrappers and envelopes in this section. The wrappers are folded letter sheets, so the apparent width varies, depending on how they were folded.

Returned letter covering wrappers

Earliest reported Canadian D L O wrapper; no other examples of this printing known.

Covering wrapper, Quebec, January 1833. The GPO was in Quebec at this time. Letter returned to sender had been prepaid *2/3,* that is, triple 9 d for 101–200 miles.


GENL. POST-OFFICE—(Dead Letter Dept.)

QUEBEC, 4 March 1833

The inclosed Letter not having been delivered for the reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by His Majesty's Post Master General for that purpose, and is now returned to you, as the Writer, on payment of the Postage.

I am,

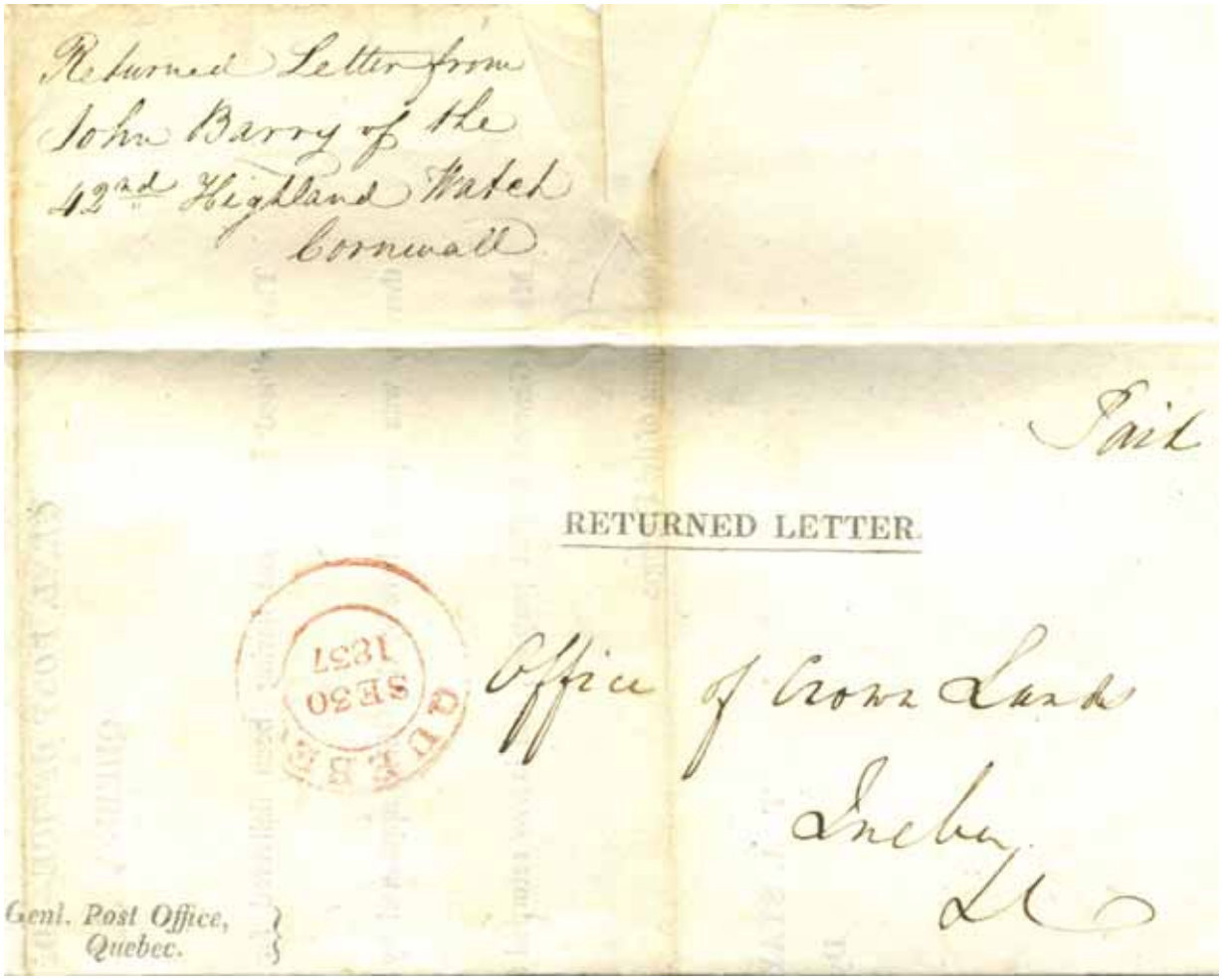
Your Obedient Humble Servant,

T. A. STAYNER,

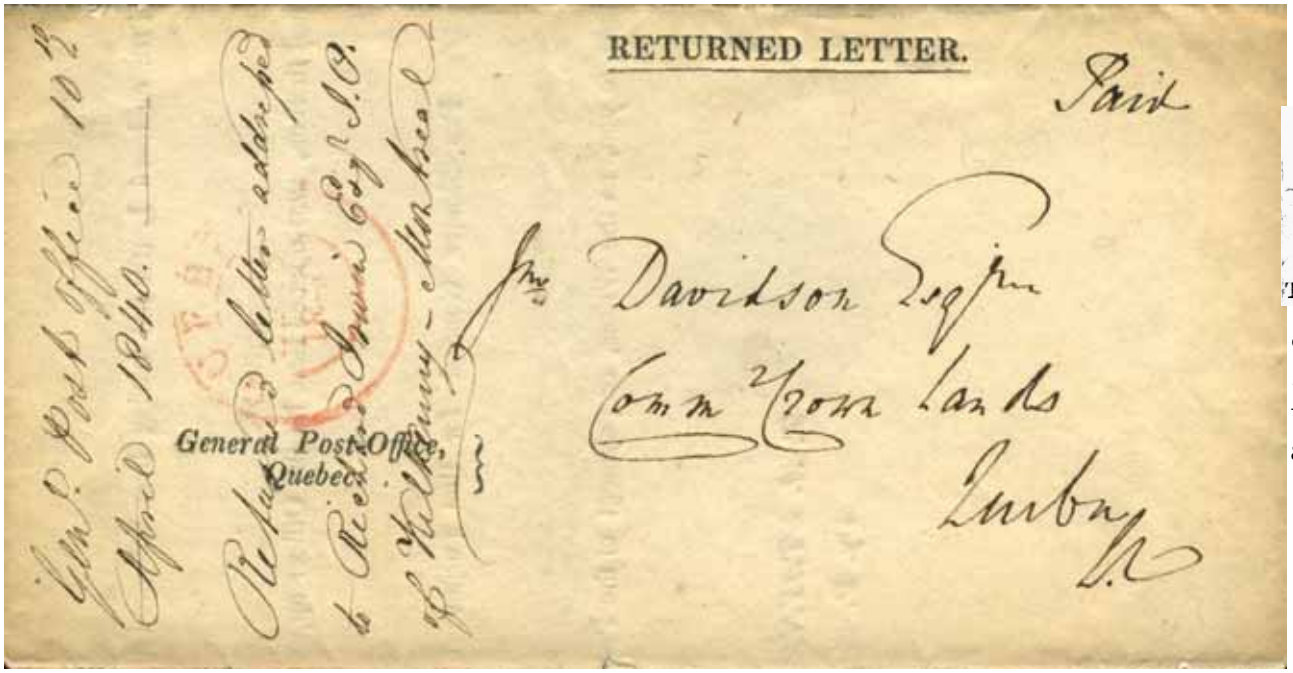
Dy. P. Mr. General.

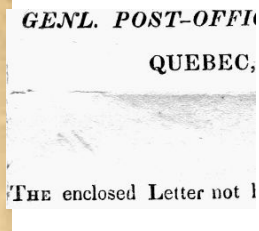
Printed on the inside of the wrapper. Wording varies slightly on the various wrappers; fonts and spacing change considerably.

Different returned letter wrappers



Covering wrapper, Quebec, 1837. Abbreviation *Genl.* at lower left distinguishes it from preceding. Contained a prepaid letter to a member of the 42nd Highland Watch in Cornwall (UC).





`enclosed` vs `inclosed` (1833); text alignment also differs.

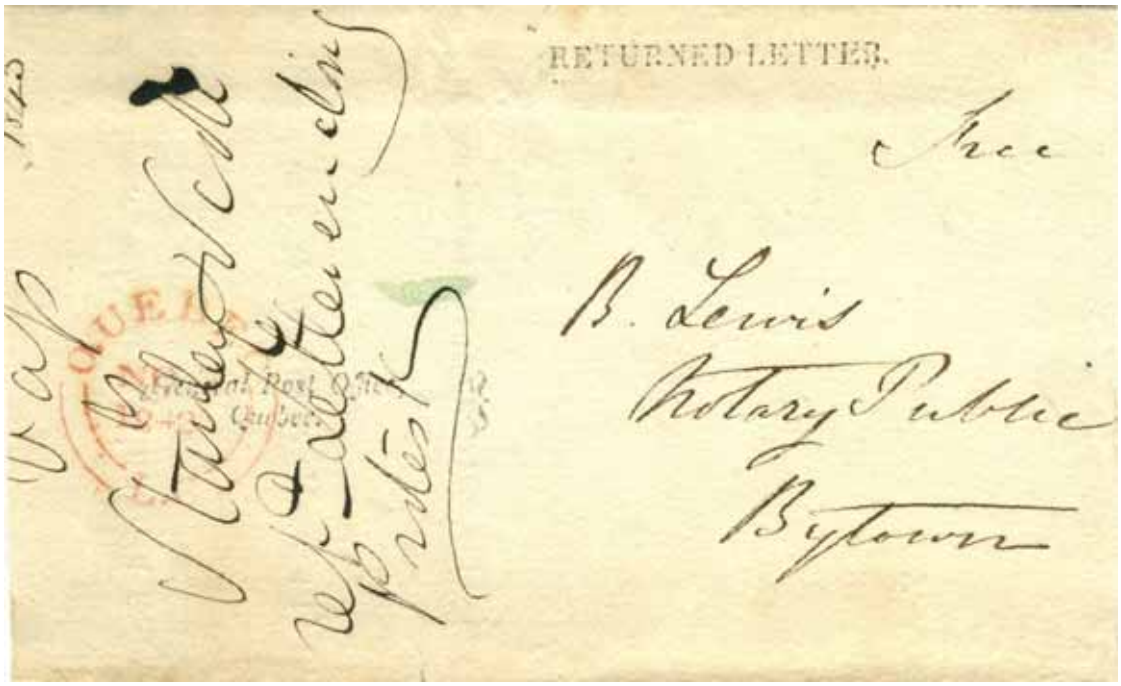
Covering wrapper, Quebec, 1840. Interior message: `enclosed` and other differences, differentiating this printing from that of the 1833 example. Contained a prepaid letter to a justice of the peace in Montreal.

Very slightly different returned wrappers (1841 & 1842)

Space between *Office* and brace differs and also differs from that of from that of the 1840 wrapper, which both strongly resemble. The rule under RETURNED LETTER is barely visible on the 1842 cover.

Although Kingston became the capital of the Province of Canada in 1841, the G P O stayed in Quebec until at least 1844 (when Montreal became the capital).

Covering wrapper, Quebec, 1841. Contained prepaid letter.

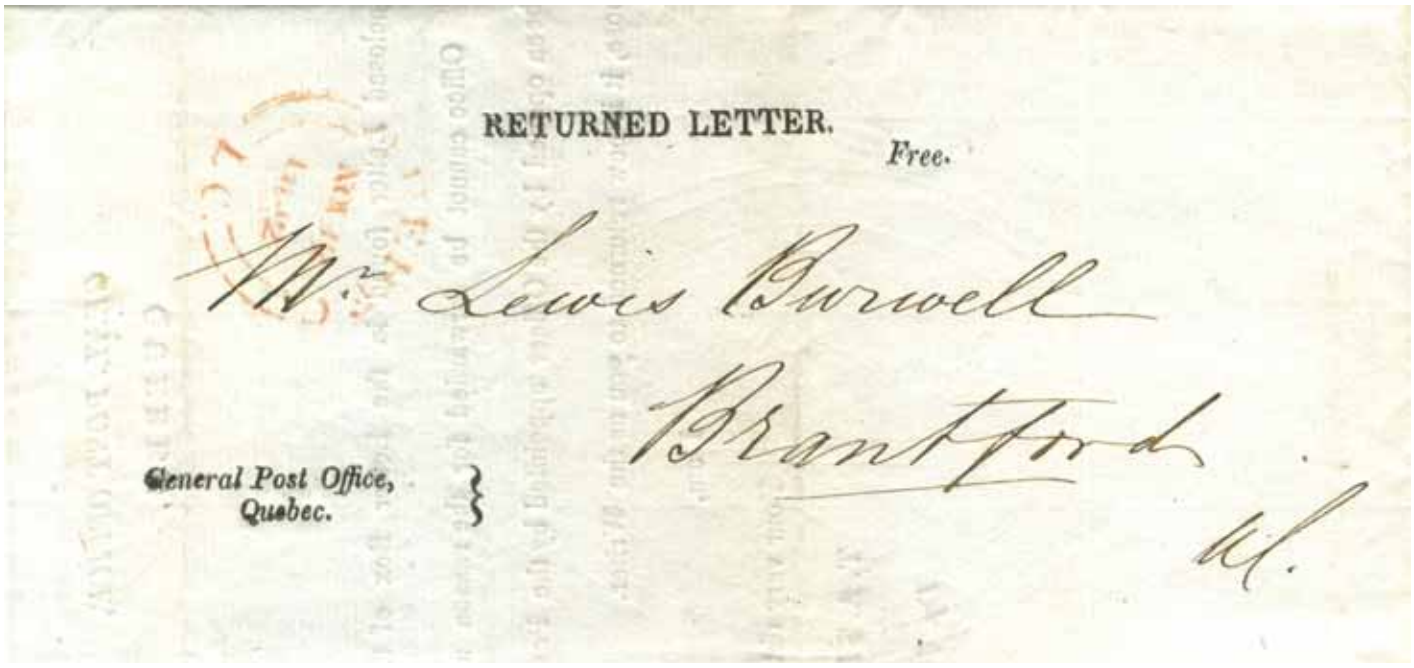


Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Bytown, 1842. Contained *free* letter (letters addressed to the Legislative Assembly were free if within ten days of a session). Poorly printed.

Unruled returned wrappers (1842)

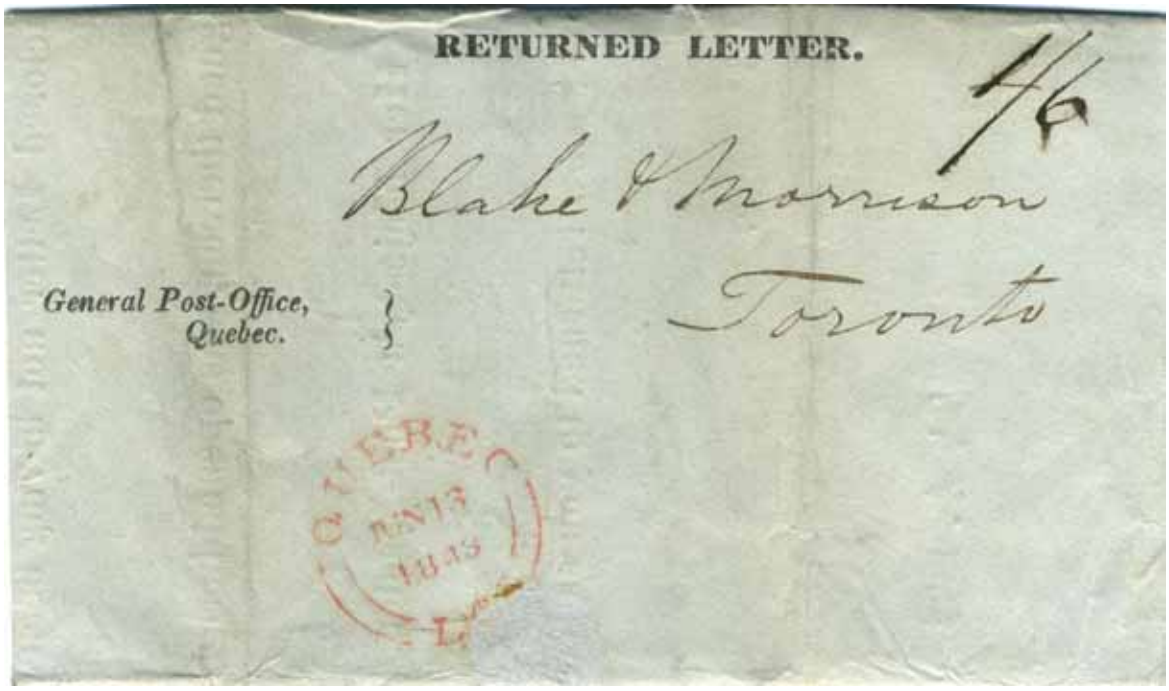
Bottom one has printed *Free.*

Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Ramsay (*UC*), 1842. Charged 4½ d collect, under 60 miles (from Ramsay).



Covering wrapper, printed Free, Quebec, returned to Brantford (*UC*), 1842. Free franked letters were so common that a special form was printed. Lewis Burwell was Provincial Land Surveyor, and likely entitled to free franking.

Blockier text (1843)


RETURNED LETTER.

1/6

Blake & Morrison

Toronto

General Post-Office,
Quebec.

QUEBEC
JUN 13
1843

Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Toronto, 1843. Charged *1/6* cy: could be quadruple under 60 miles or double 101–200 miles.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, QUEBEC,

Dead Letter Department.

THE enclosed Letter not having been delivered for the reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by Her Majesty's Post-Master General for that purpose, and is now returned to you as the Writer, on payment of the Postage.

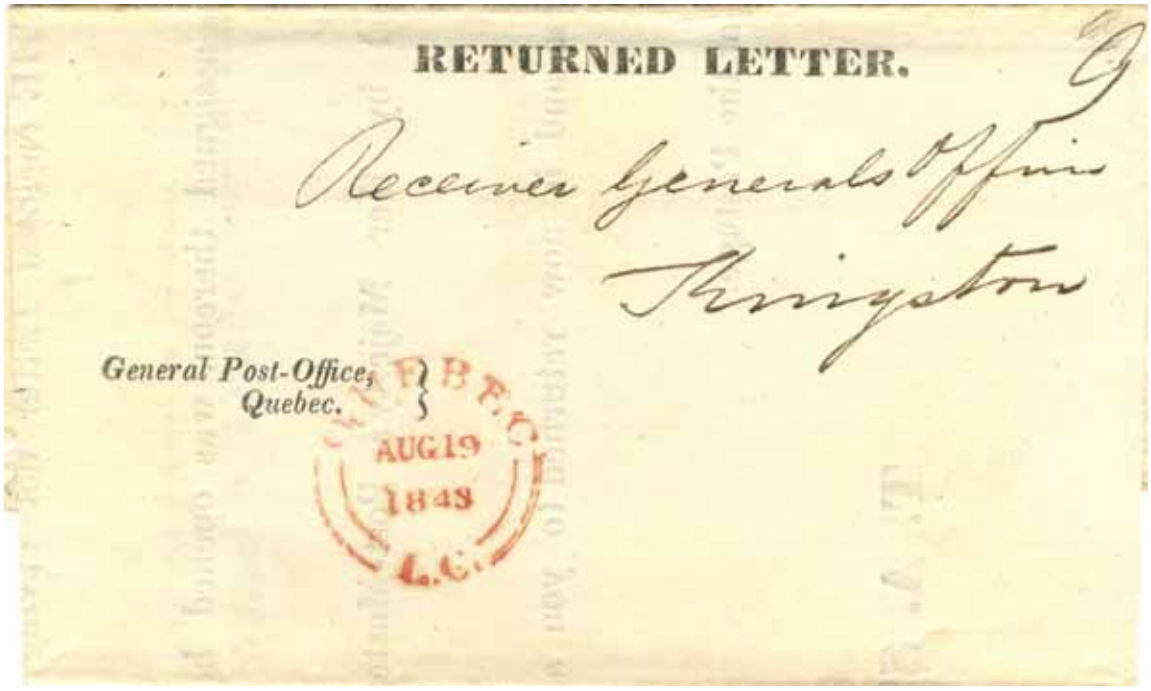
T. A. STAYNER,

Dy. P. Master Genl.

Font is heavier than those of preceding wrappers.

Wrapper with enclosed returned letter (1843)

Only such pre-Confederation pair known.



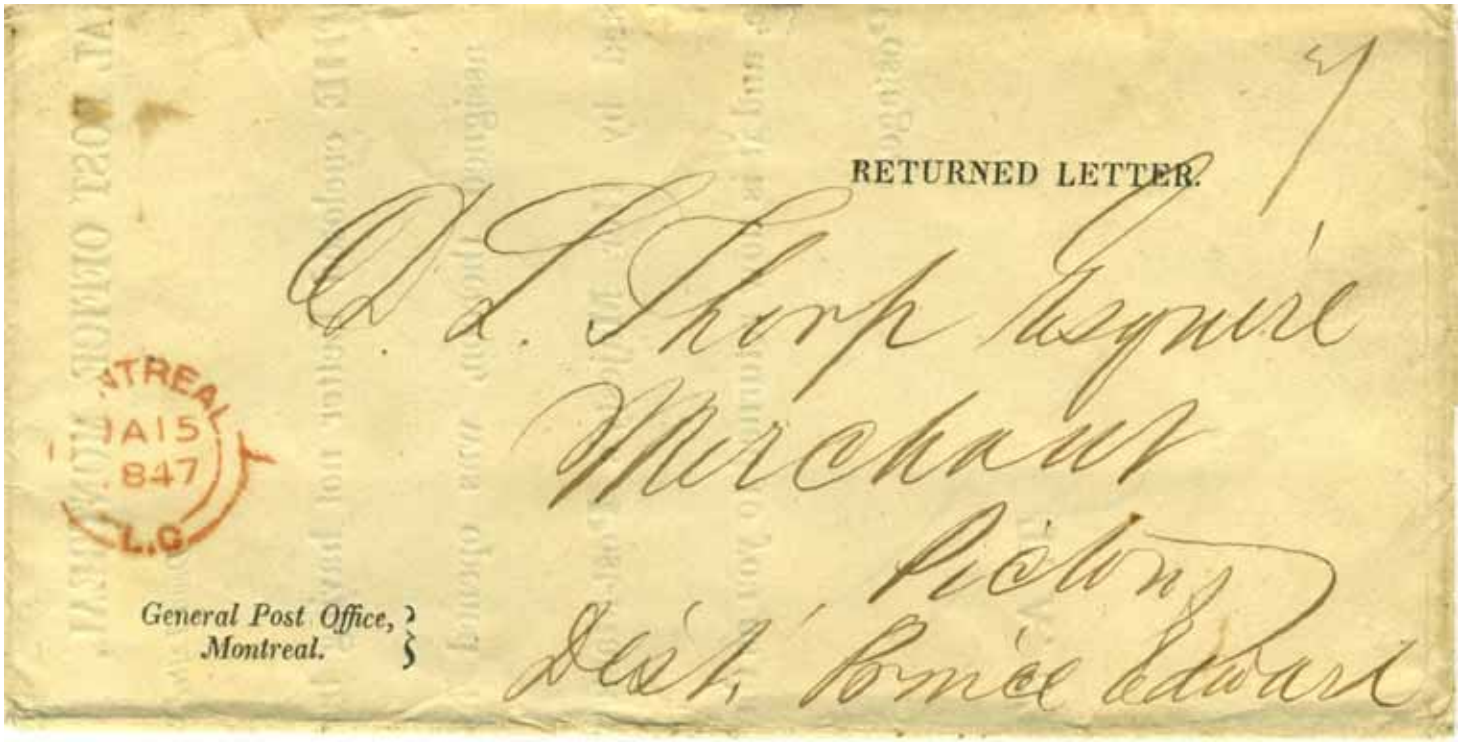
Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Kingston, 1843. Bigger RETURNED LETTER than 1842 wrapper. Charged *9* cy: single 101–200 miles, Kingston–Montreal, confirmed by letter below.

Enclosed returned letter, refused, 1843. Charged *9* cy as above. Ms on reverse (in red, at top) reads
Refused
PO Montreal July 24 1843.

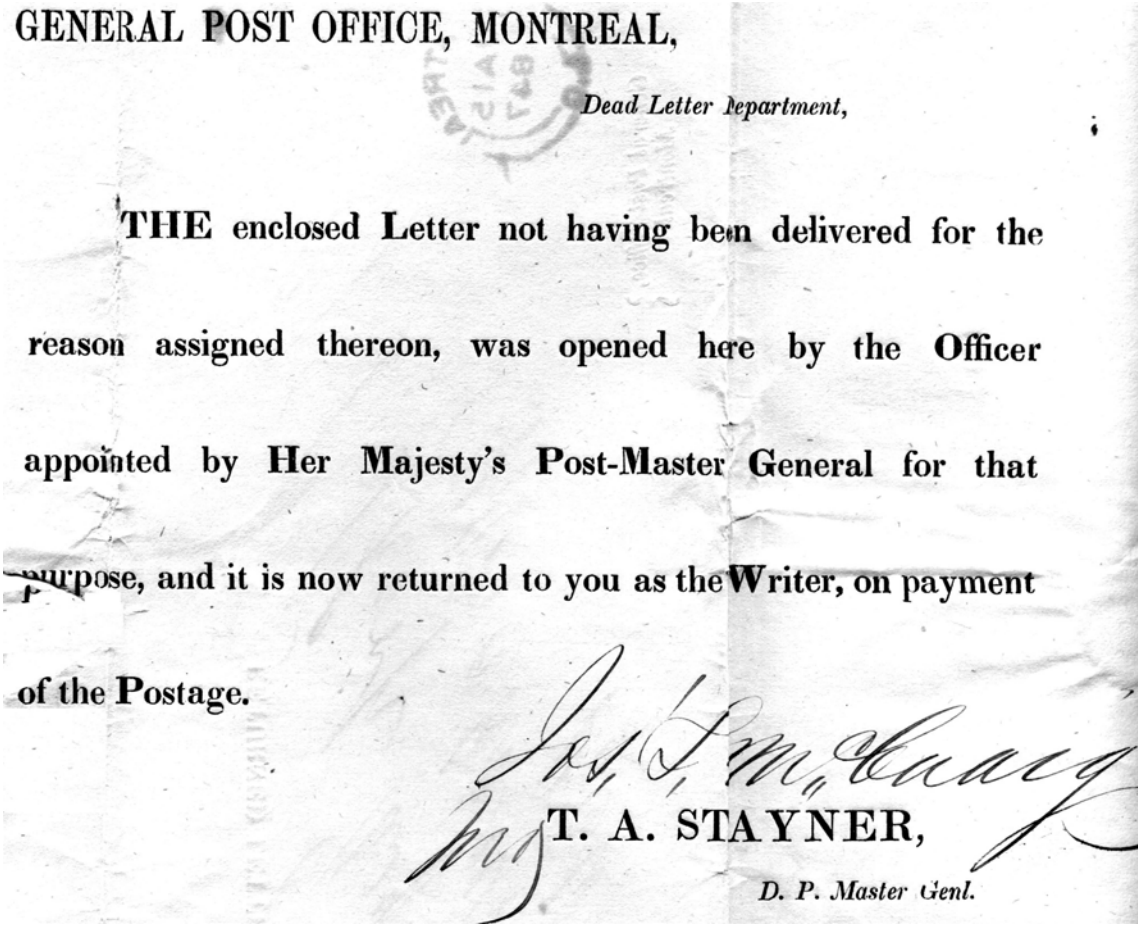
Red Montreal FORWARDED applied (incorrectly, but consistently at Quebec and Montreal) to indicate that it was sent to (G P O) Quebec.

GPO moves to Montreal

Likely in 1844 (when Montreal became the capital of the Province of Canada), but the earliest known wrappers from Montreal are dated 1847.



Covering wrapper, Montreal, returned to Picton (*UC*), January 1847. Charged 7d cy, 101–200 miles (from Picton).


GENERAL POST OFFICE, MONTREAL,

Dead Letter Department,

THE enclosed Letter not having been delivered for the reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by Her Majesty's Post-Master General for that purpose, and it is now returned to you as the Writer, on payment of the Postage.

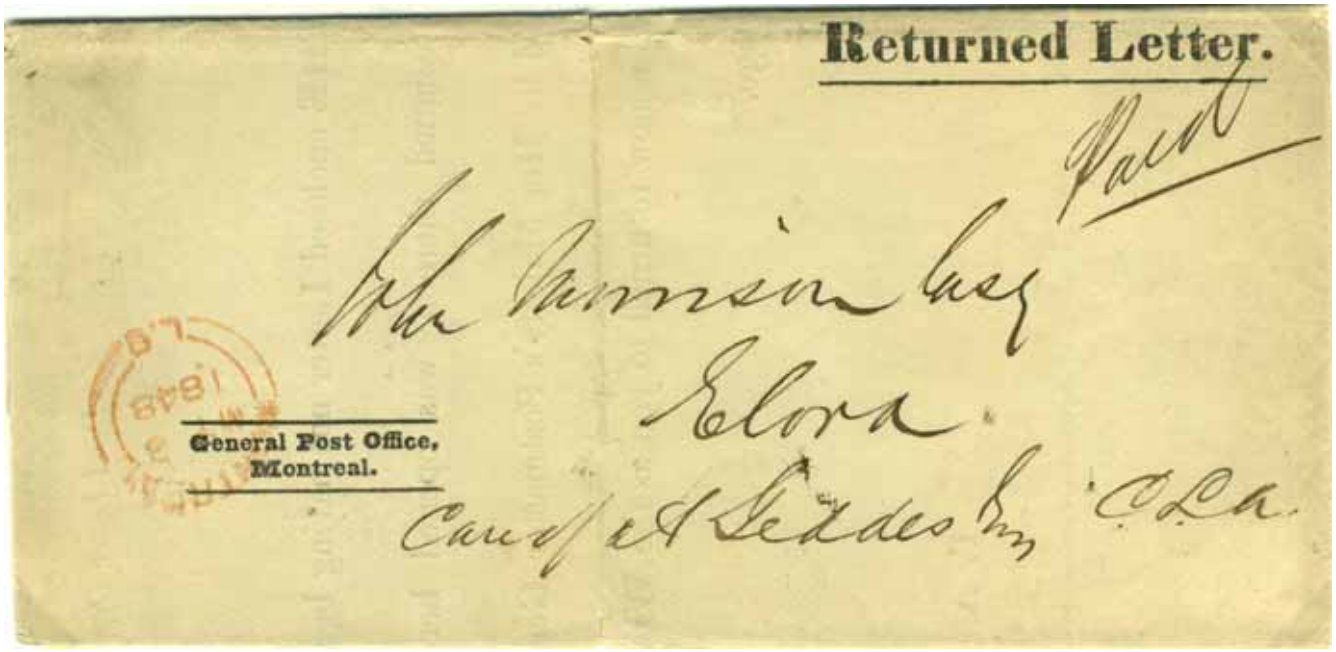
T. A. STAYNER,

D. P. Master Genl.

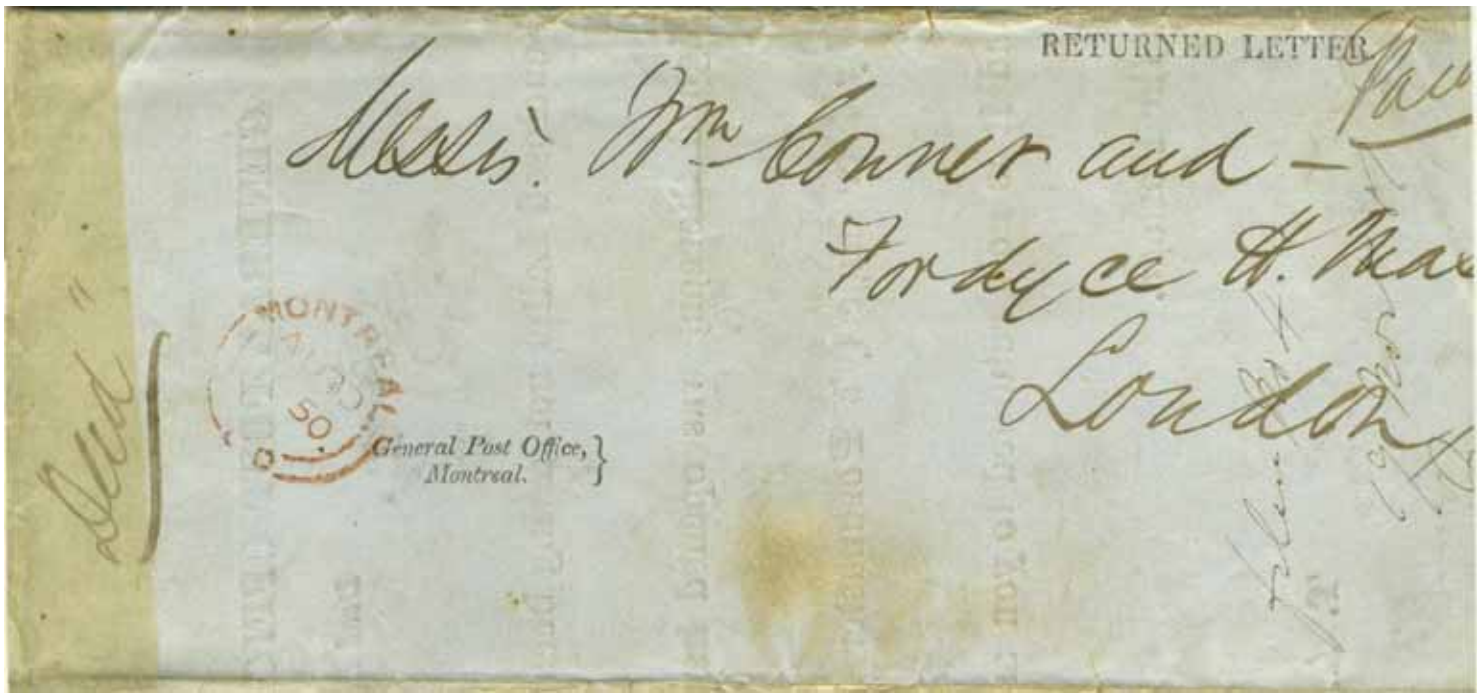
About 50% larger than this!

Montreal wrappers (1848 & 1850)

Italics on 1850 wrapper different from those on 1847 example.



Covering wrapper, Montreal, returned to Elora (*UC*), 1848. Original letter prepaid.



Covering wrapper, Montreal, returned to London (*UC*), 1850. Original letter prepaid.

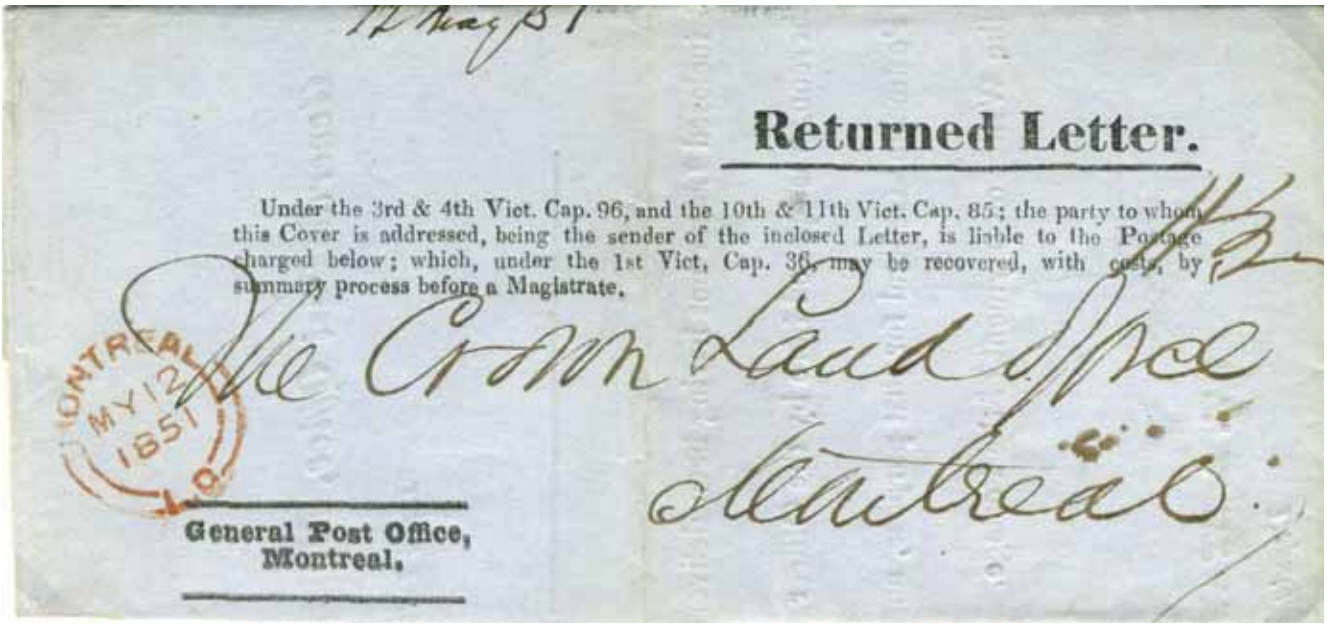
Montreal wrappers (1849 & 1851)

Very similar wrappers; differ in length of rule under **Returned Letter**, and vertical space between rules at lower left.

Although the capital of Canada moved to Toronto in 1849, the GPO remained in Montreal until at least 12 May 1851. However, as of 17 May 1851, it was in Toronto. Letters mailed before the change in administration and rates in April 1851 but arriving at the DLO *after* the changeover, were handled and charged as they had been under the old system.

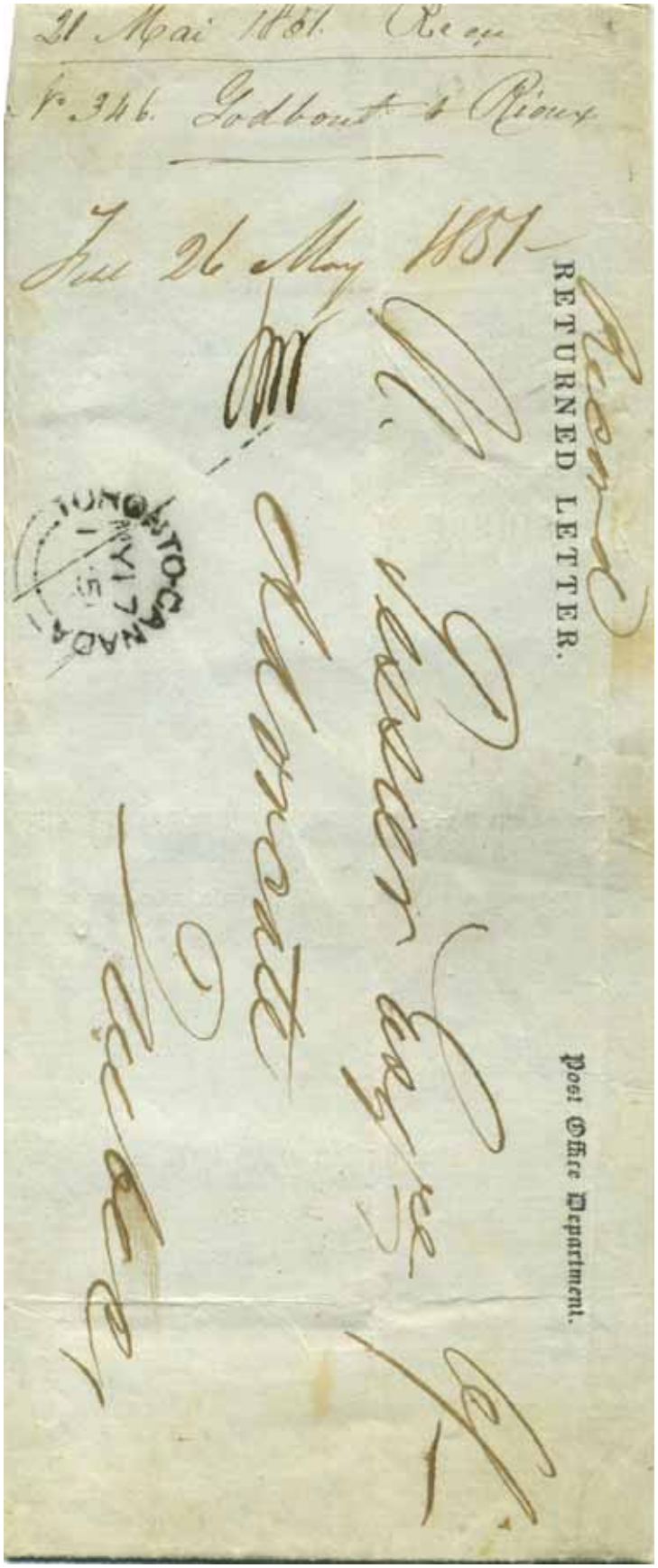
Covering wrapper, Montreal, returned to Toronto, 1848. Original letter charged *4½* d cy (under 60 miles).

Returned Letter.



Covering wrapper, Montreal, 12 May 1851. Original letter charged *11½* d cy (201–300 miles).

Returned Letter.



GPO DLO moves to Toronto (1851)

Occurred during 13–17 May 1851 on the basis of these covers (same date) and earlier one at Montreal.

J Morris became Postmaster General of Province of Canada (6 April 1851; post office comes under domestic control), replacing TA Stayner (formerly Deputy PMG).

Uncut double form wrapper, printed recto-verso, Toronto, returned to Quebec, 17 May 1851. Postage of *6/–* cy, very heavy multiple weight charged under the old (pre-6 April) regime, obviously bulky, and requiring uncut double wrapper. Ms *M* **may** indicate *money letter*; no examples of returned monely letters known.

Normal single wrapper—same printing, same date—Toronto, returned to Montreal. Charged *9* d cy, possibly triple current domestic rate (3d), but more likely single 201–300 miles under the old regime. ↓↓

Service charge introduced (ca 1852)

D L O introduced a fee of 1d per returned item (plus any applicable postage due).

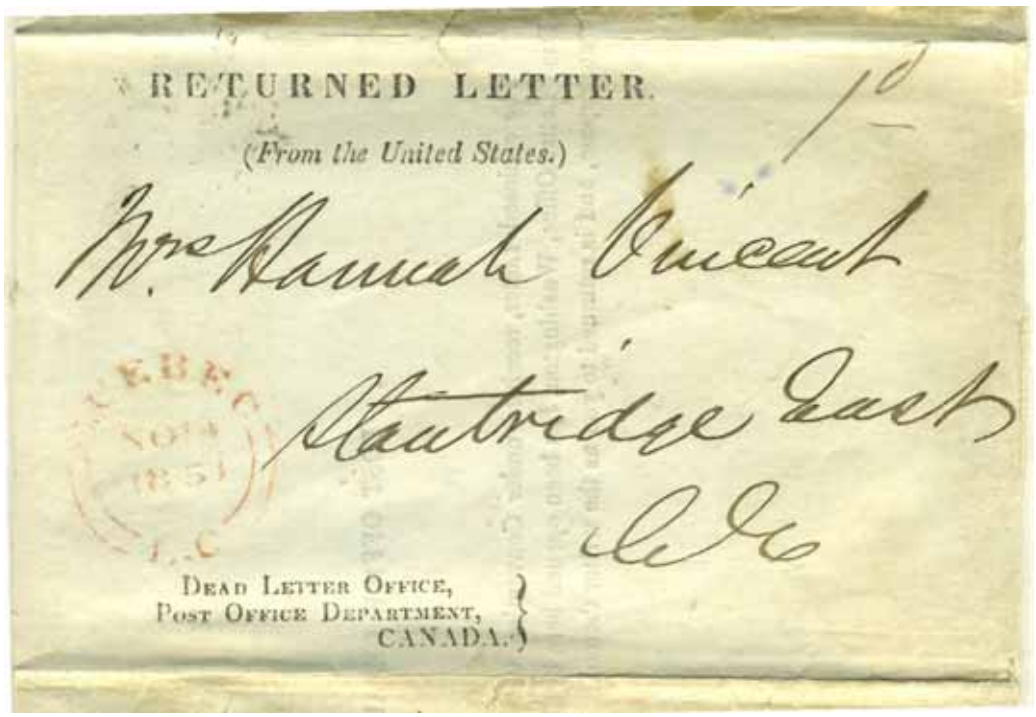
Top item has printed RETURNED PAID LETTER, bottom item has RETURNED LETTER with *'s* added to indicate a multiple (in this case, three).

Covering wrapper, Toronto, returned to Crown Lands in Quebec, 1852. Charged 2^{∂}cy for return of two items. Earliest printed use of PAID on returned letter wrappers.

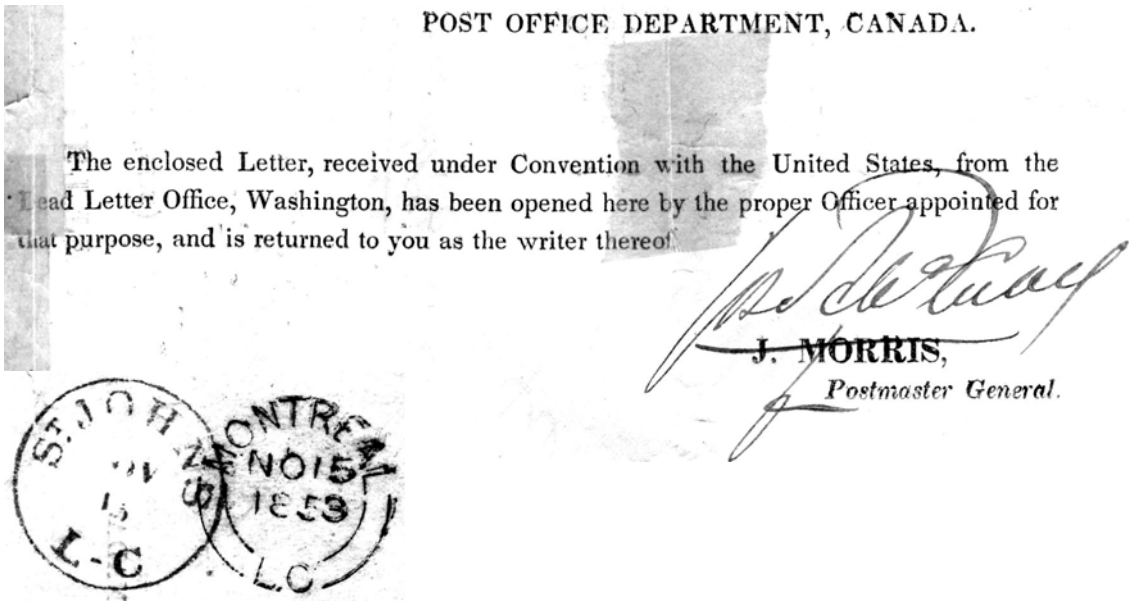
Covering wrapper, Toronto, returned as above, 1852. Charged *3*d cy for return of three letters.

Wrapper for return of cross-border letter

Only known example of returned letter wrapper or envelope *intended* for items addressed abroad.



Covering wrapper, returned to Stanbridge East (*CE*)*, from the US,* 1853. Charged *1*$^{\partial}$cy for return of one item.

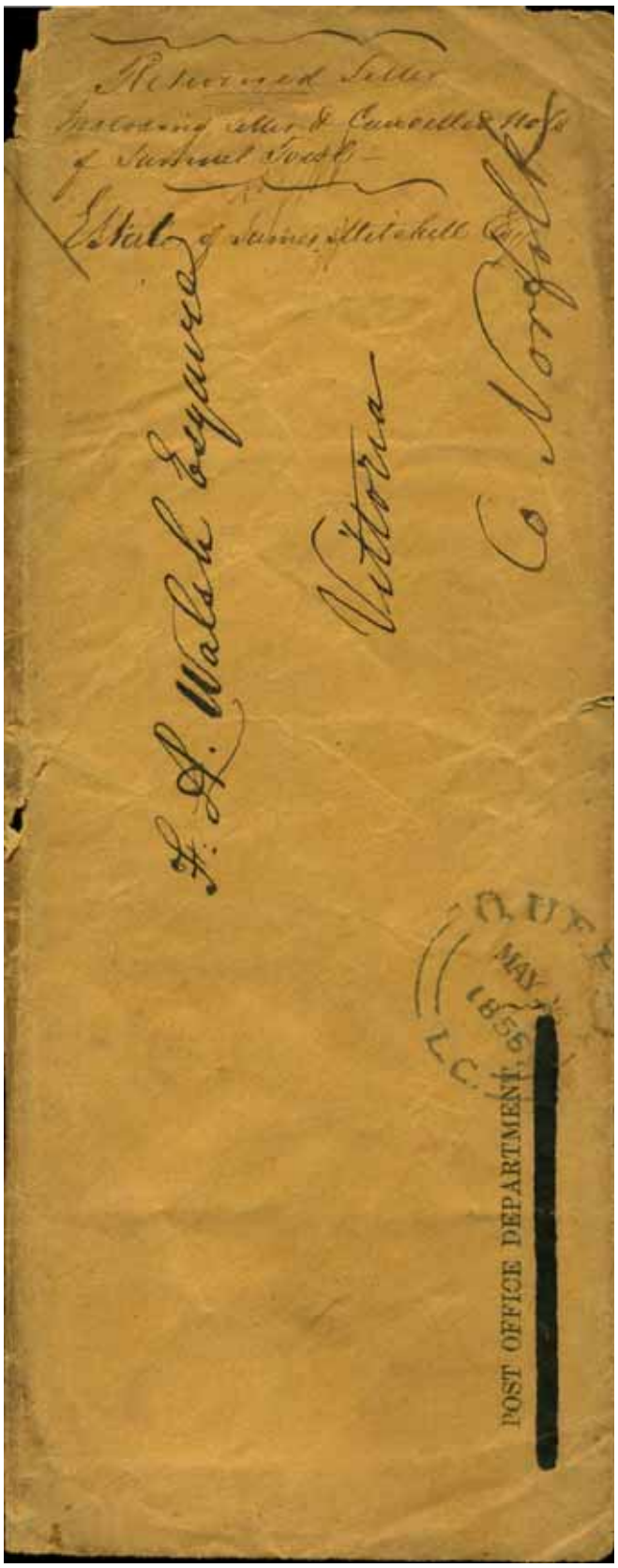

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, CANADA.

The enclosed Letter, received under Convention with the United States, from the Dead Letter Office, Washington, has been opened here by the proper Officer appointed for that purpose, and is returned to you as the writer thereof.

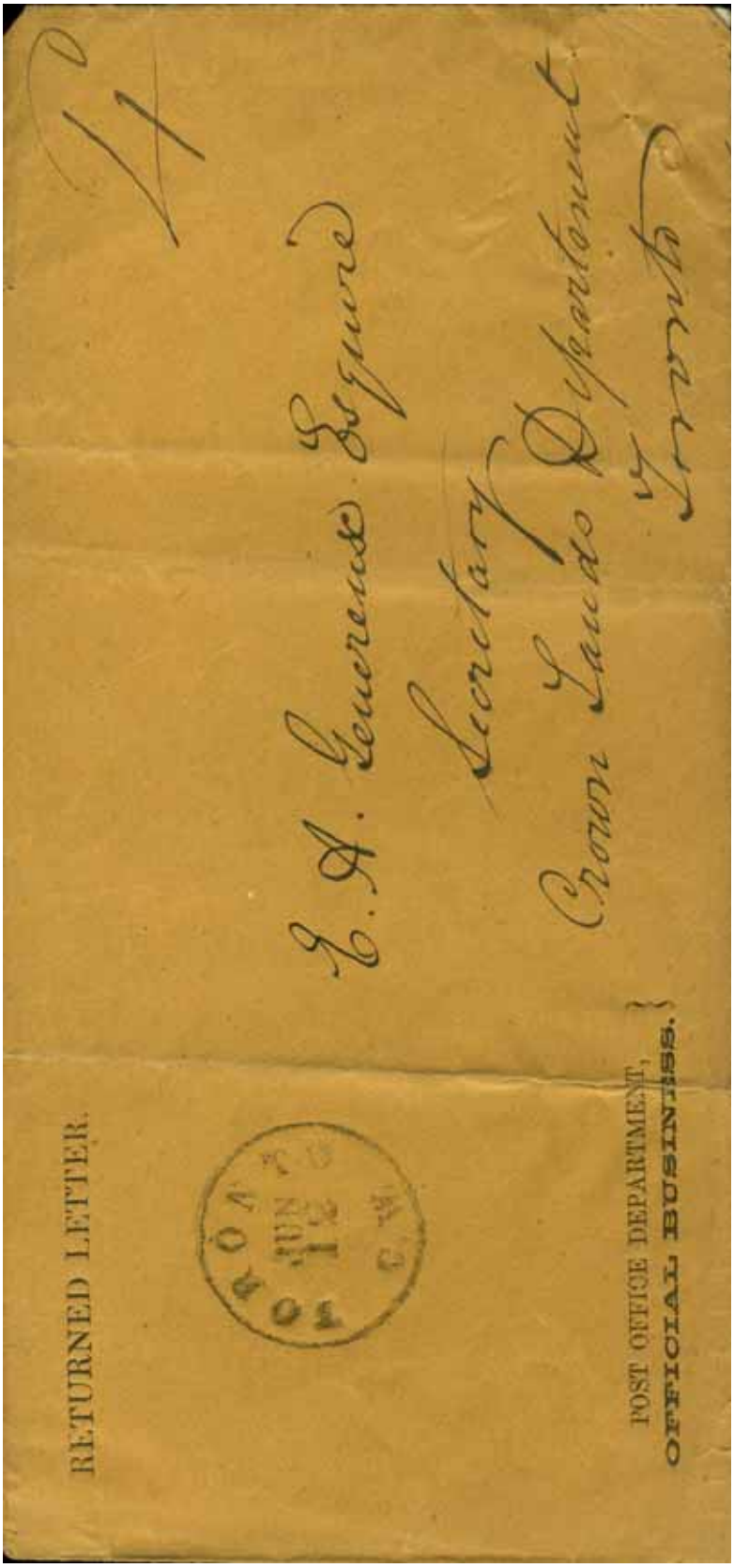
J. MORRIS,
Postmaster General.

Envelopes introduced (1853–1855)

The British D L O replaced wrappers by envelopes in 1853; the province of Canada plausibly did this in the same year. Two of the three known pre-Confederation; left one appears to be provisional use.



Covering envelope from Quebec, returned to Vittoria (CW), May 1855. Charged *1*d cy (left) service charge. Docketing at top: *Returned letter . . . .*

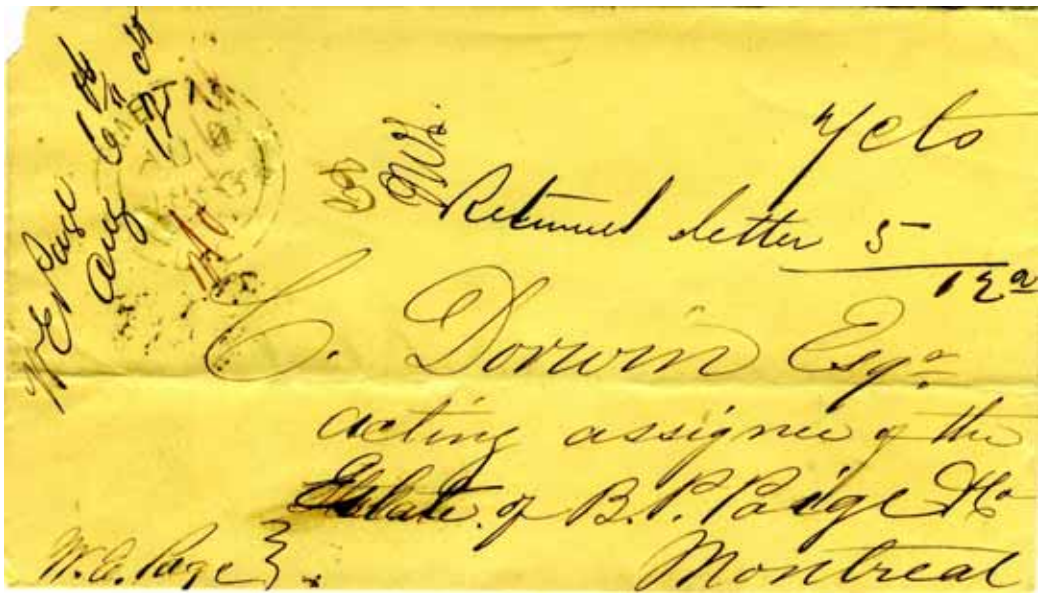


Covering envelope, Toronto, returned to Crown Lands, now in Toronto, June 1855. Due 4d, either four times 1d fee (four items) or single domestic item 1d + 3d collect.

An 1863 returned letter

Since there are no known returned letter covering envelopes dated 1857–1868, we show an 1863 letter which had been returned and for which the returned letter fee was applied, incidentally showing that the service charge was 5¢ (and likely had been this from 1859, when Canada converted to decimal currency).

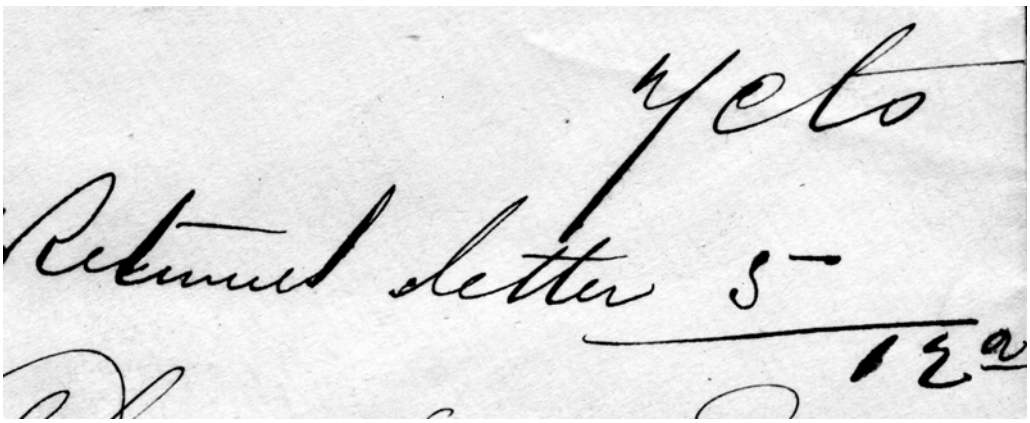
This may be regarded as a space-filler for a returned letter covering envelope in this period.



Returned letter, originally Metis–Montreal, 1863. Charged 7¢ the collect (not prepaid) single domestic rate to which the *Returned letter* fee of 5¢ was added. *The only evidence that the return service charge was 5¢ at any time in* 1859–1868.

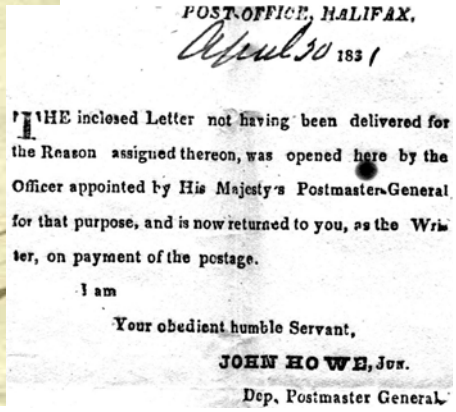
The absence of a Metis receiver suggests that from Montreal, the cover was sent to the D L O (probably in Ottawa at the time), then returned in a covering envelope.

The double broken circle Metis datestamp is known used 1858–1863.



Nova Scotia returned letter wrappers (1831 & 1846)

Two of the three reported pre-Confederation NS returned letter wrappers or envelopes.


POST-OFFICE, HALIFAX,
April 30 1831

THE inclosed Letter not having been delivered for the Reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by His Majesty's Postmaster-General for that purpose, and is now returned to you, as the Writer, on payment of the postage.

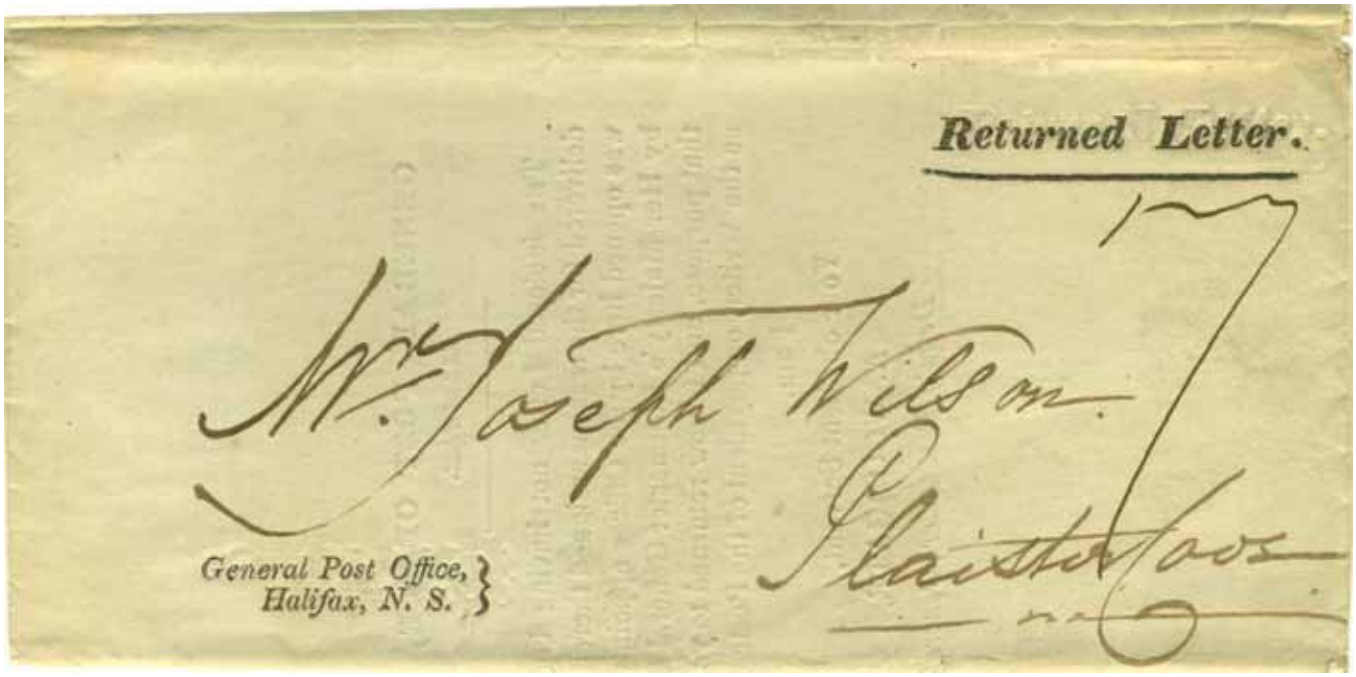
I am

Your obedient humble Servant,

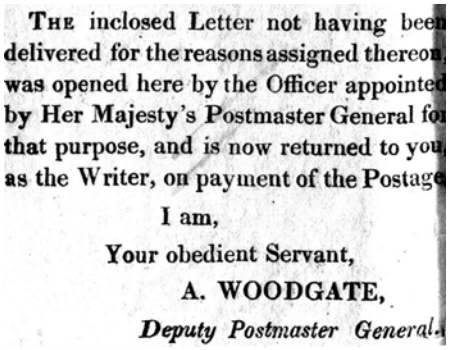
JOHN HOWE, Jun.

Dep. Postmaster General.

Covering wrapper, Halifax, returned to York (*Toronto*) *via Quebec,* 1831. Collect *4N6* cy, double rate York–Halifax. Illustrated in JGY. *Earliest* BNA *returned letter wrapper known.*



Covering wrapper, Halifax, to Plaister Cove (*NS*), 1846. Collect 7d cy, Halifax–Plaister Cove.


THE inclosed Letter not having been delivered for the reasons assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by Her Majesty's Postmaster General for that purpose, and is now returned to you, as the Writer, on payment of the Postage

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

A. WOODGATE,

Deputy Postmaster General.

Nova Scotia returned letter envelope (1850–60s)

Returned letter envelope, returned to Pictou, undated. No apparent service charge. On inside flap:

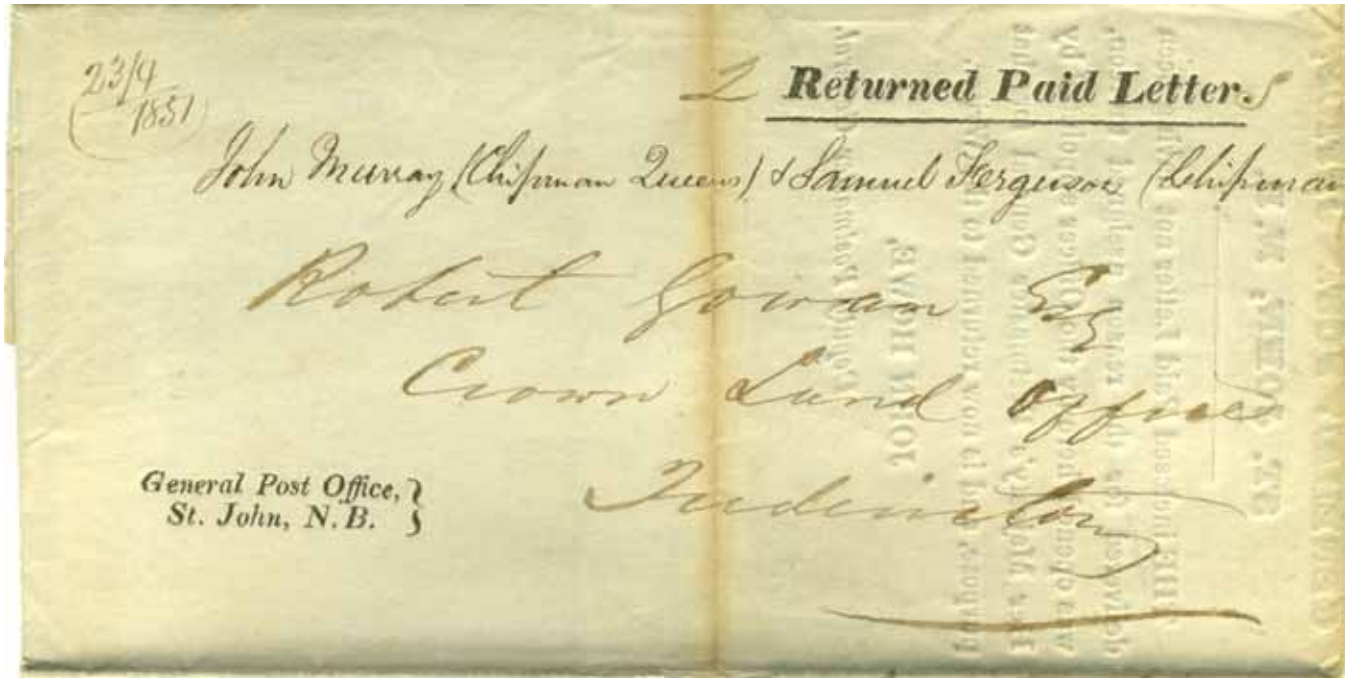
The enclosed letter is returned for the reason thereon assigned on payment of the Postage.

A. WOODGATE,
P. M. General.

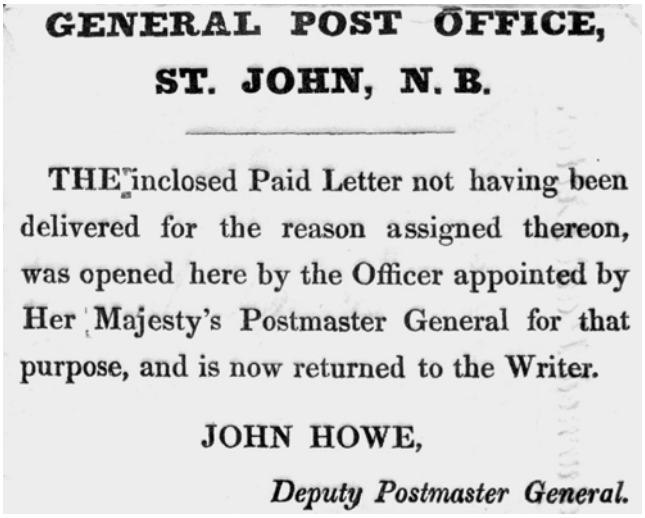
Arthur Woodgate was Deputy Postmaster General of Nova Scotia 1843–1851, Postmaster General 1851–1867, and after Confederation, PO Inspector. The notation *Dead Letter Branch* and the printed details suggest this is dated just a few years before Confederation. *Only reported Nova Scotia returned letter envelope.*

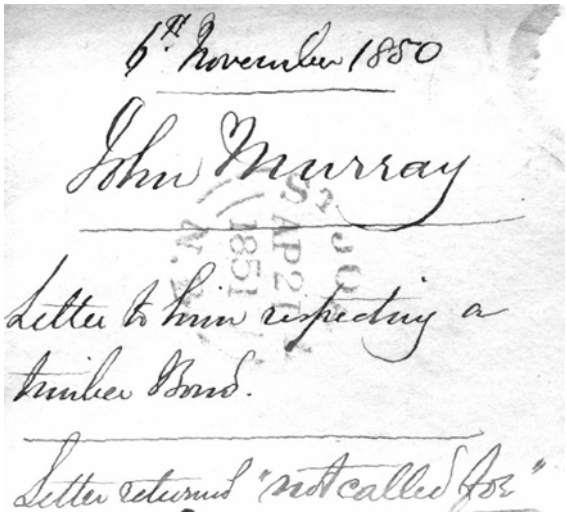
New Brunswick returned letter wrapper (1851)

One of two known NB returned letter wrappers (same printing).



Covering wrapper, Saint John, returned to Fredericton, 1851. Contained two prepaid letters.

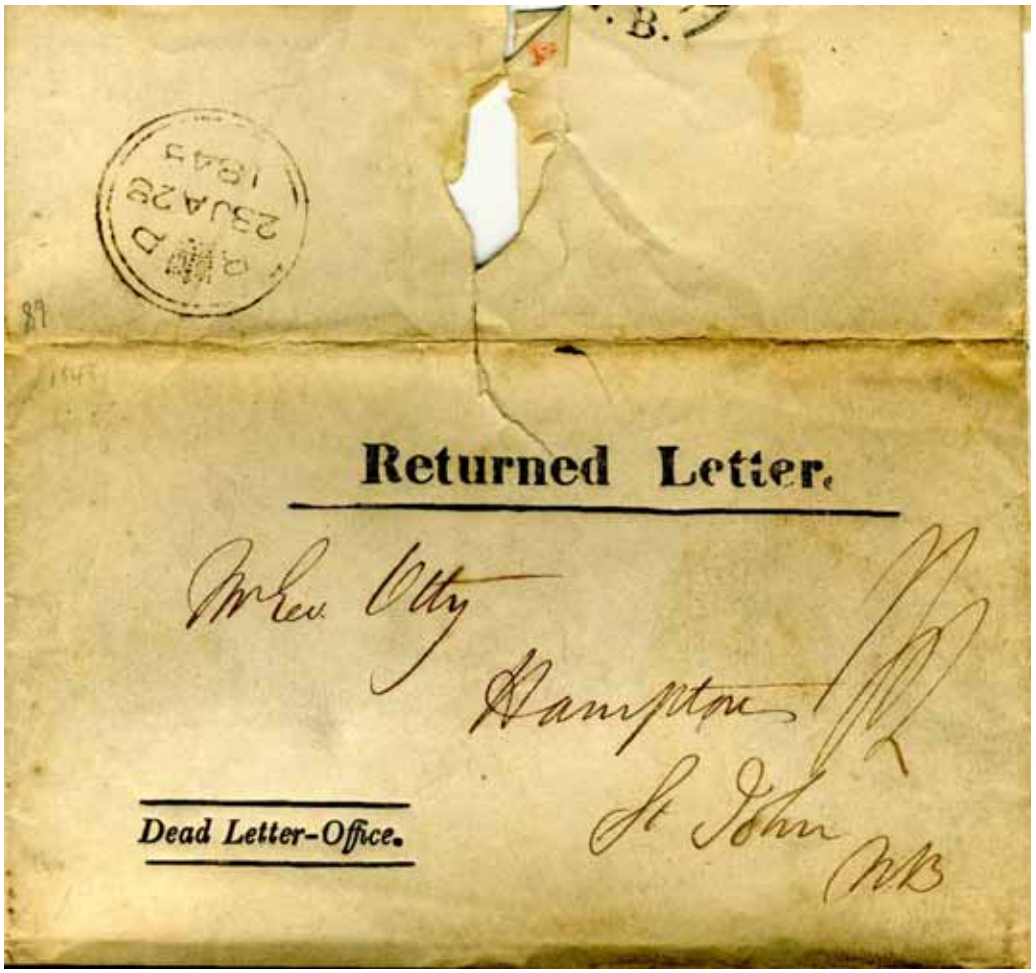




Docketing: *Letter returned* not called for

UK returned letter covering wrapper to New Brunswick (1848)

The UK instituted a returned letter service in the 18th century, and the Canadian system was based on it. Very few UK returned letter wrappers to BNA are known.



UK covering wrapper, returned to Saint John (NB), 1848. Charged *1/2* (stg—although this is not made clear on the cover) the postage due on the enclosed letter (from Hampton, near Saint John, to UK), 2d stg rate to Canadian port on a packet letter to UK plus 1/– stg packet rate.

GENERAL POST-OFFICE.

THE inclosed Letter not having been delivered for the Reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by Her Majesty's Postmaster-General for that purpose, and is now returned to the Writer.

W. L. MABERLY,
Secretary.

Printed on interior (enlarged). Very similar to wording on Canadian wrappers.

Post-Confederation (1868) to formation of branch offices (1898)

In April 1868, extensive changes were made to postal rates in Canada (the first since 1859). The service charge for returning dead letters (from the D L O) rose to 5¢ at this time. This was reduced to 3¢ in 1878.

In addition, most formula envelopes included print order data, usually in the form of quantity printed and either the date of printing or of ordering. Around 1875, return covering envelopes also acquired an initial, **D**, usually followed by a number, in the print order data.

Items to be returned that were originally sent registered, were returned by registered mail. Initially, there was to be a 2¢ fee for this, but by 1878, this extra fee had been dropped.

Earliest reported post-Confederation covering envelope (1869)

Registered, returned to Toronto, March 1869 [front]. Print data: 10,000–7-'68. *One other example of this form envelope is known.* Rating is problematic; plausibly, 5¢ return service tripled (three returns) and 2¢ for registration ignored.

Large covering envelope, free

Used to return larger or bulkier envelopes. Printed in far smaller quantities than the smaller sizes (here 5000).

This cover represents the earliest print data of all known D L O covering envelopes (but not the earliest use), 6-68.

No service charge was applied for the return of mail that travelled free through the mails, such as to or from federal government offices (during and slightly before and after Parliament was in session).

Returned, free, to Assistant Commissioner of Crown Lands, Quebec, September 1872. Print data: 5,000–6-68. On flap:

Large covering envelope, returned registered

At this time, and until ca 1878, returned registered letters were charged an additional 2¢ for return by registered mail.

Returned registered to Postmaster, Toronto, March 1871. Print data: 2,000–10-69. (Very low print run.) Probably enclosed three returned letters (at 5¢ each), at least one of which was registered, hence the extra 2¢.

Red D L O wax seal on reverse.

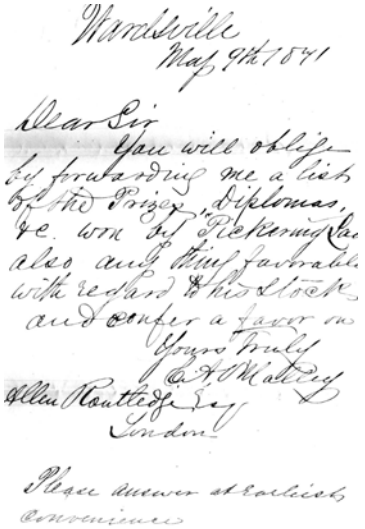
With enclosure (1871)

Returned to Wardsville (*ON*), August 1871. Print data: 10,000-6-71. Charged 5¢ return service fee. Docketing at right reads *Returned letter from Dead Letter Office 22/8/71.* Contained cover below.

ADVERTISED
AND
NOT-CALLED-FOR

applied at London.

Enclosed cover, Wardsville to London (*ON*)*, mailed in May.* Domestic 3¢ postage paid. *Its* enclosure, the letter from O'Malley to Routledge, below:


Wardsville
May 9th 1871

Dear Sir
You will oblige
by forwarding me a list
of the Prizes, diplomas,
&c. won at Pickering
also any thing favorable
with regard to the stock
and confer a favor on
Yours truly
C. O'Malley
Allen Routledge Esq
London

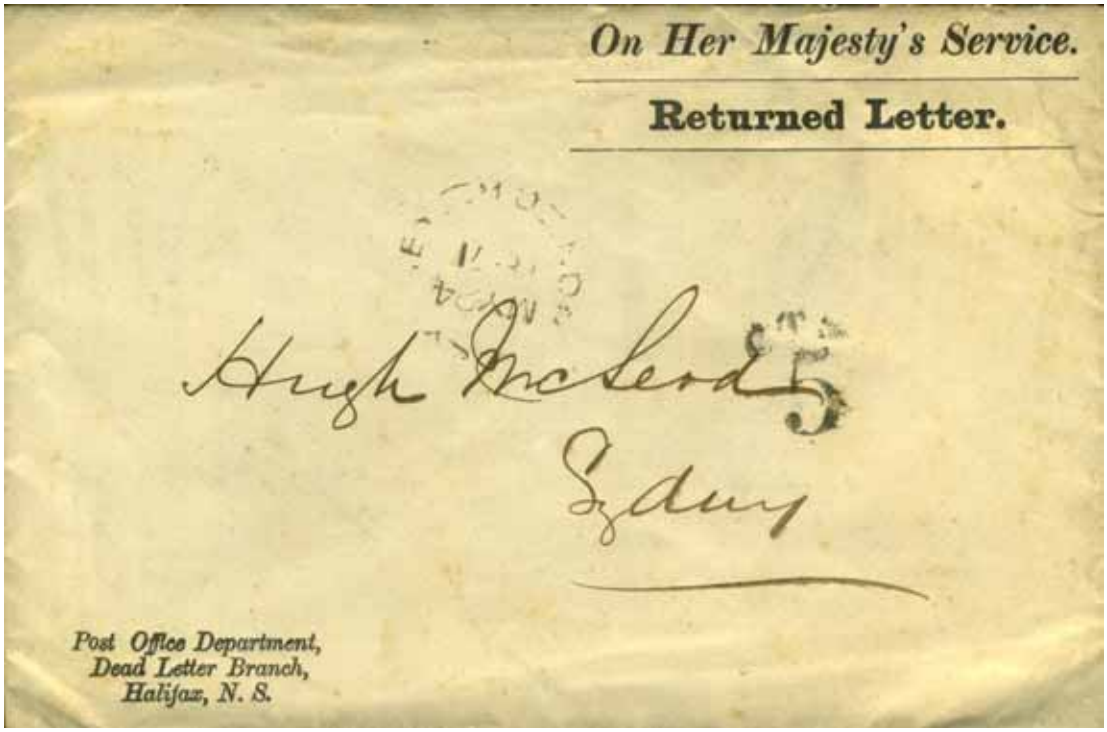
Please answer at earliest
convenience

The enclosed Dead Letter is returned by direction of the Postmaster General for the reason thereon assigned.

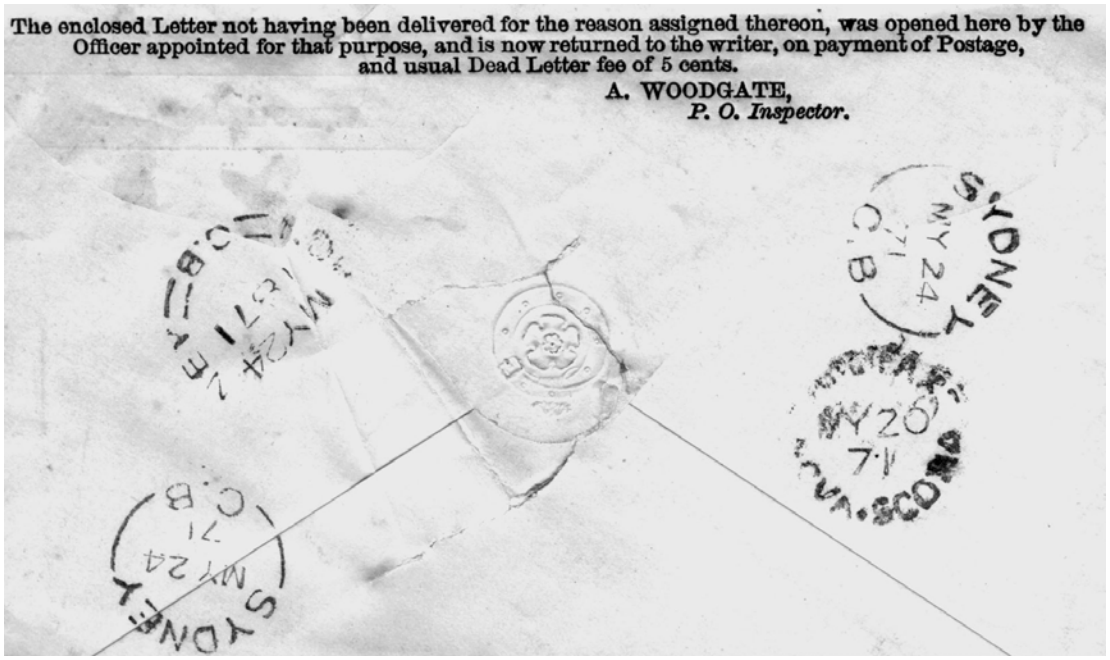
All post-Confederation D L O returned dead letter covering envelopes until ca 1905 bore this (or similar) on the flap.

Nova Scotia returned letter envelope (1871)

From the *Dead Letter Branch, Halifax, N.S.* This is a post-Confederation printing—on reverse, A Woodgate is given as PO Inspector, whereas pre-Confederation, he was DPMG of Nova Scotia. Shows that Halifax had its own branch D L O at this time. *Only known example of a returned letter covering envelope from any branch* D L O *prior to* 1898.



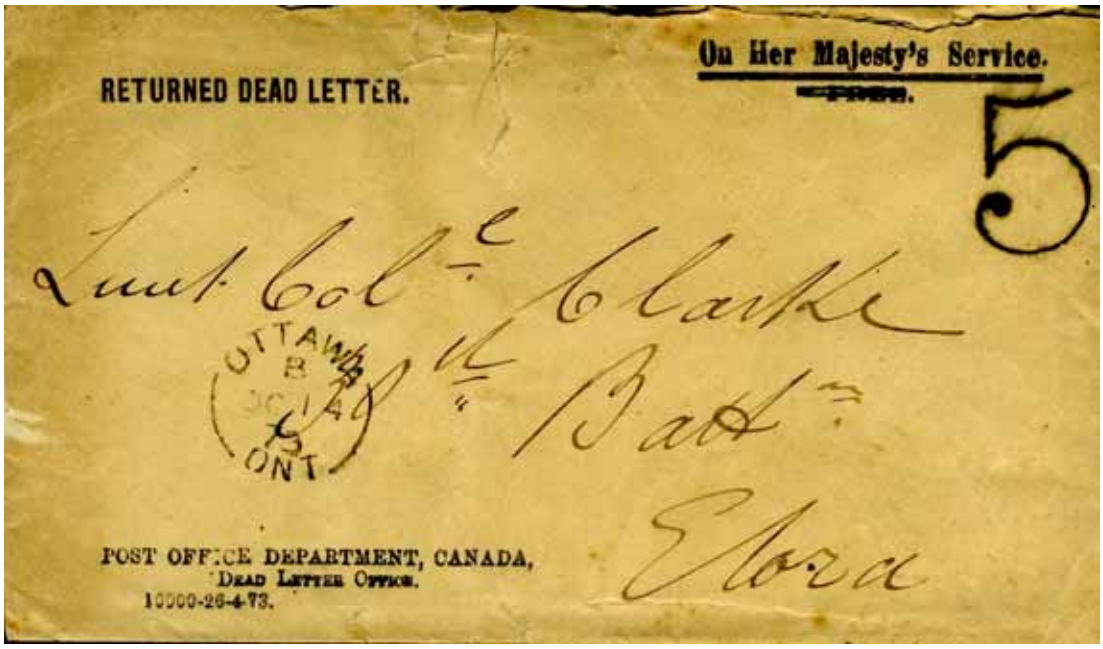
Returned to Sydney (*NS*), May 1871. Charged 5¢ return service fee.



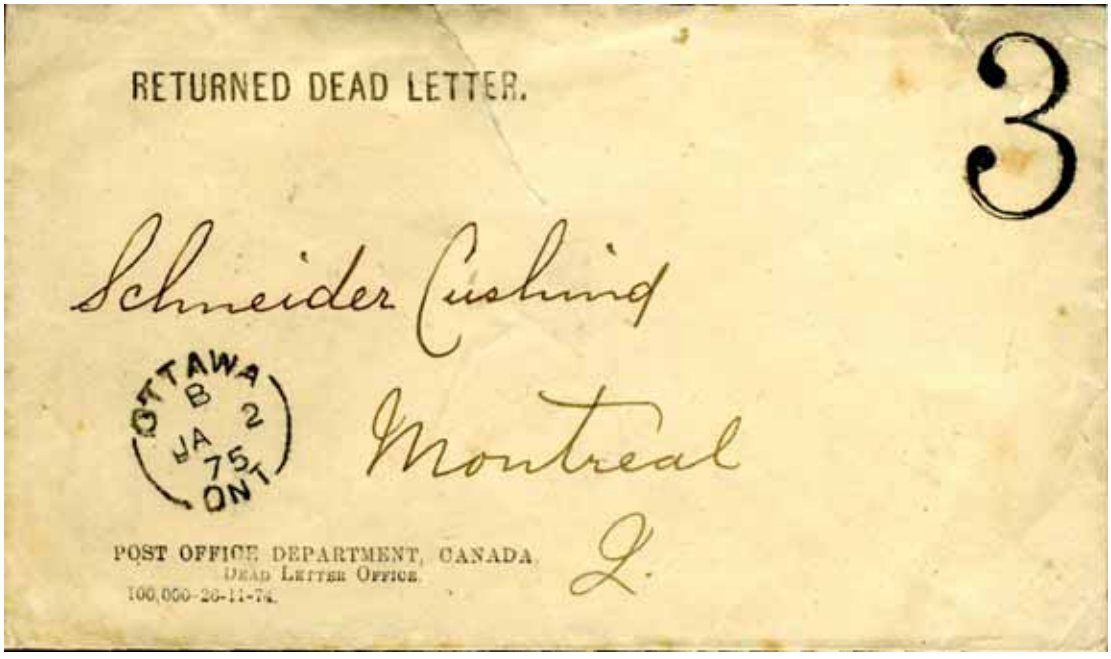
From Halifax (20 MAY), to North Sydney [double broken circle; also on front] (24 May), and to Sydney on the same day.

Service fee reduced from 5¢ to 3¢

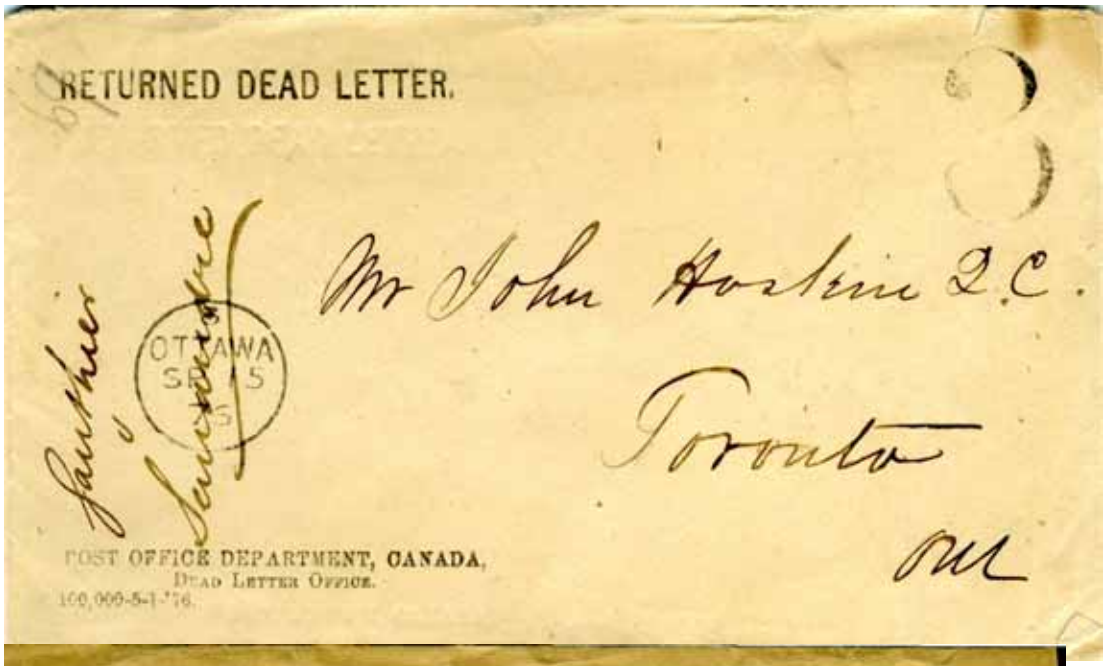
Likely occurred 1 January 1875, when a number of postal regulations were changed.



Returned to Elora (*ON*), October 1873. Print data: 10,000-26-4-73. Charged 5¢ return service fee. Printed **FREE** struck through by printed rule. Now with **On Her Majesty's Service** and rule at upper right. Addressed to Lt-Col of the 30th Battalion.



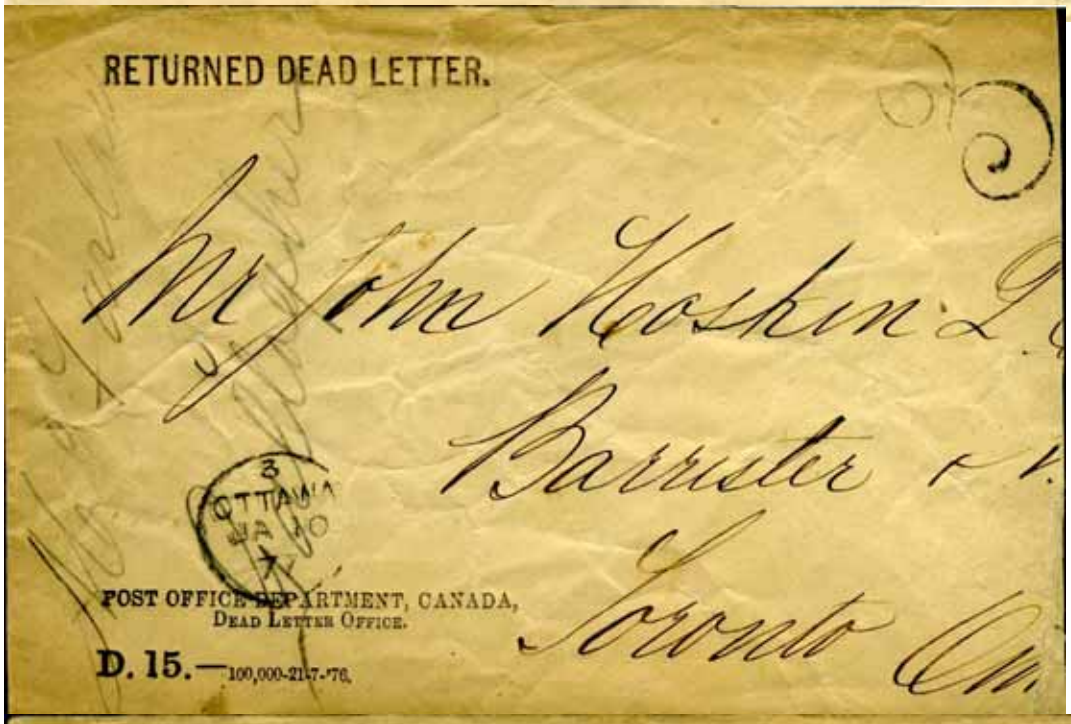
Returned to Montreal, 2 January 1875—probably the earliest example of the 3¢ service charge (an example dated three weeks later is also known, confirming that it is not from 1876 with a year error). Print data: 100,000-26-11-74



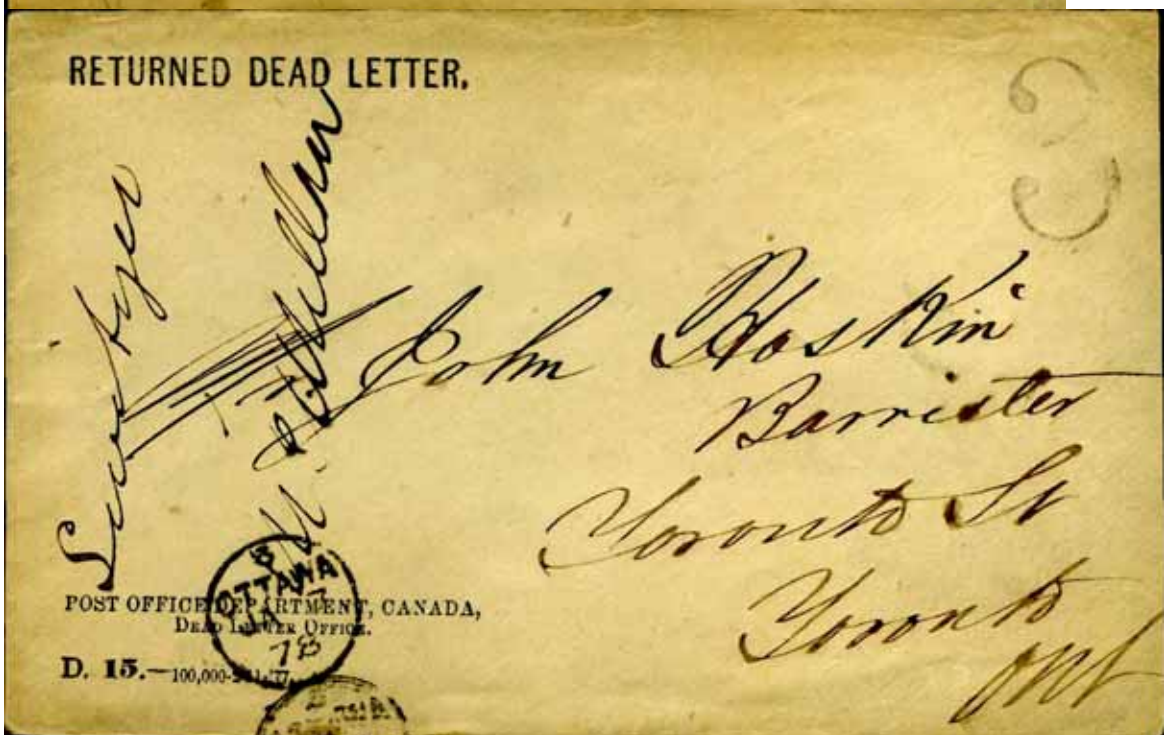
Letter **D** and number (most frequently 15) added to print data

Based on examples (seen here), occurred between January & July 1876 printings. **D** may have stood for first initial of D L O.

Returned to Toronto, albino printing, September 1876. Print data: 100,000-5-1-'76. All printing on left duplicated inklessly about half a centimetre below it. Charged 3¢ service fee.



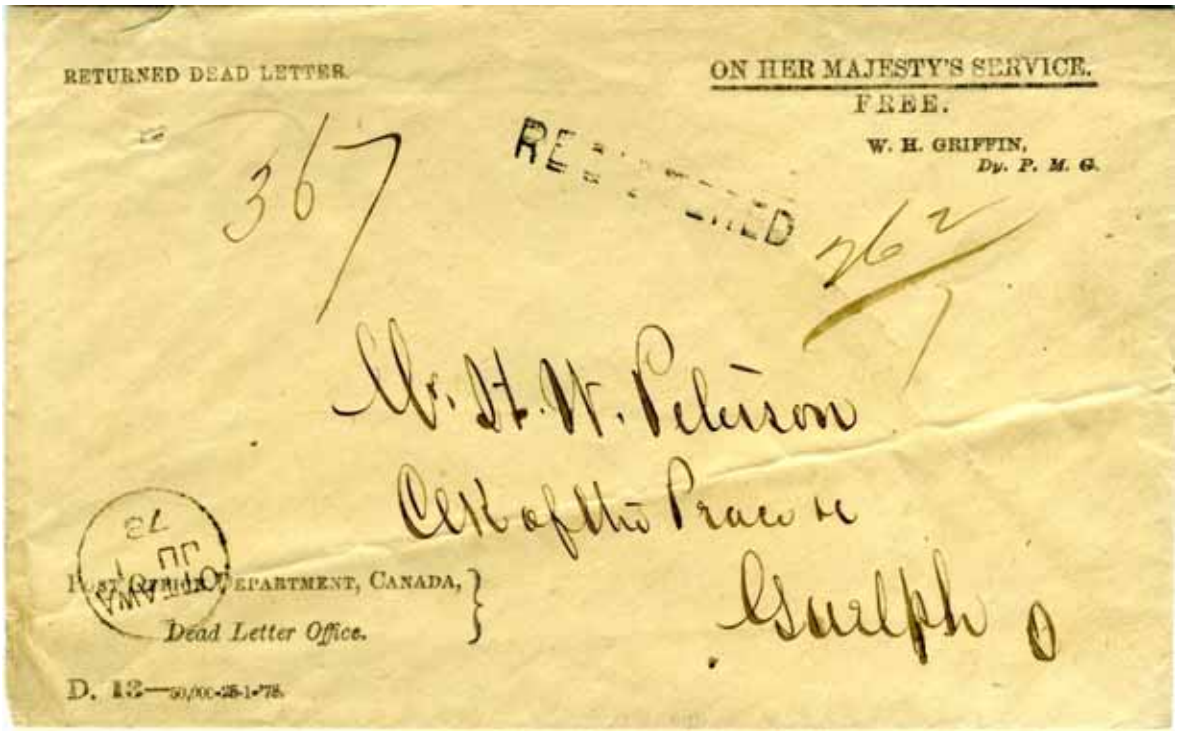
Returned to Toronto, January 1877. Print data: **D. 15.**—100,000-21-7-'76. 3¢ service fee.
Earliest reported use of alphanumeric prefix on print data, here quite a bit larger than later examples.



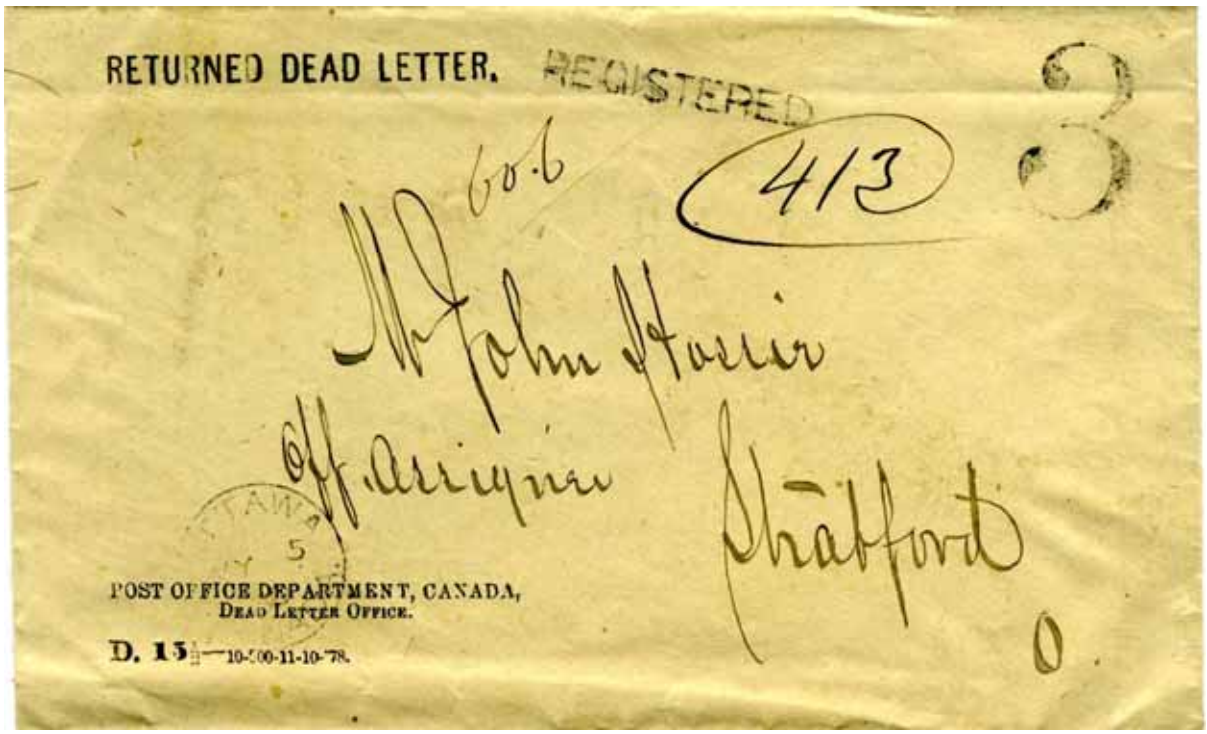
Returned to Toronto, January 1878. Print data: D. 15.—100,000-2-11-'77. Charged 3¢ service fee.

Fee for registration (of returned registered dead letters) dropped

Likely occurred 1875–1878, but examples are difficult to find.

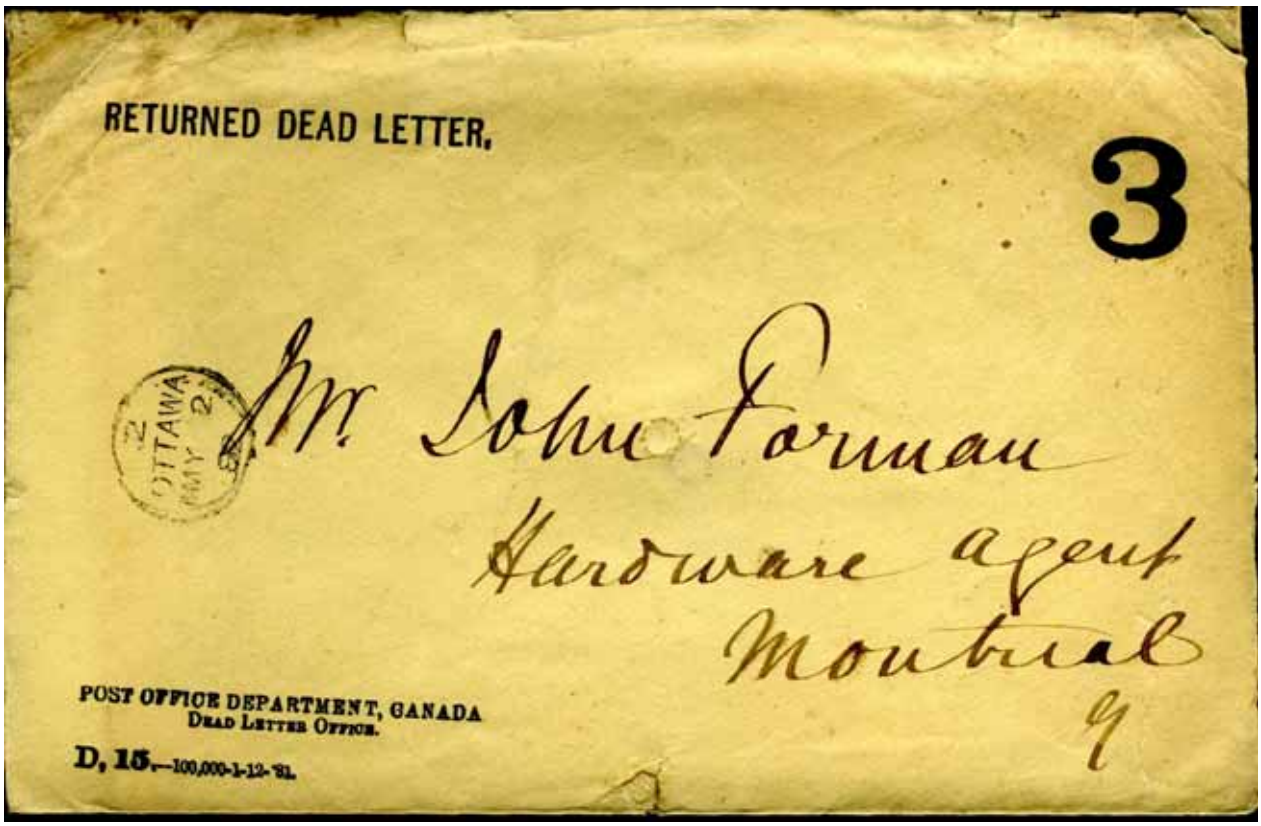


Returned registered & free to Guelph (*ON*), June 1878. Printed FREE. Print data: D. 13—90,000-25-1-78.

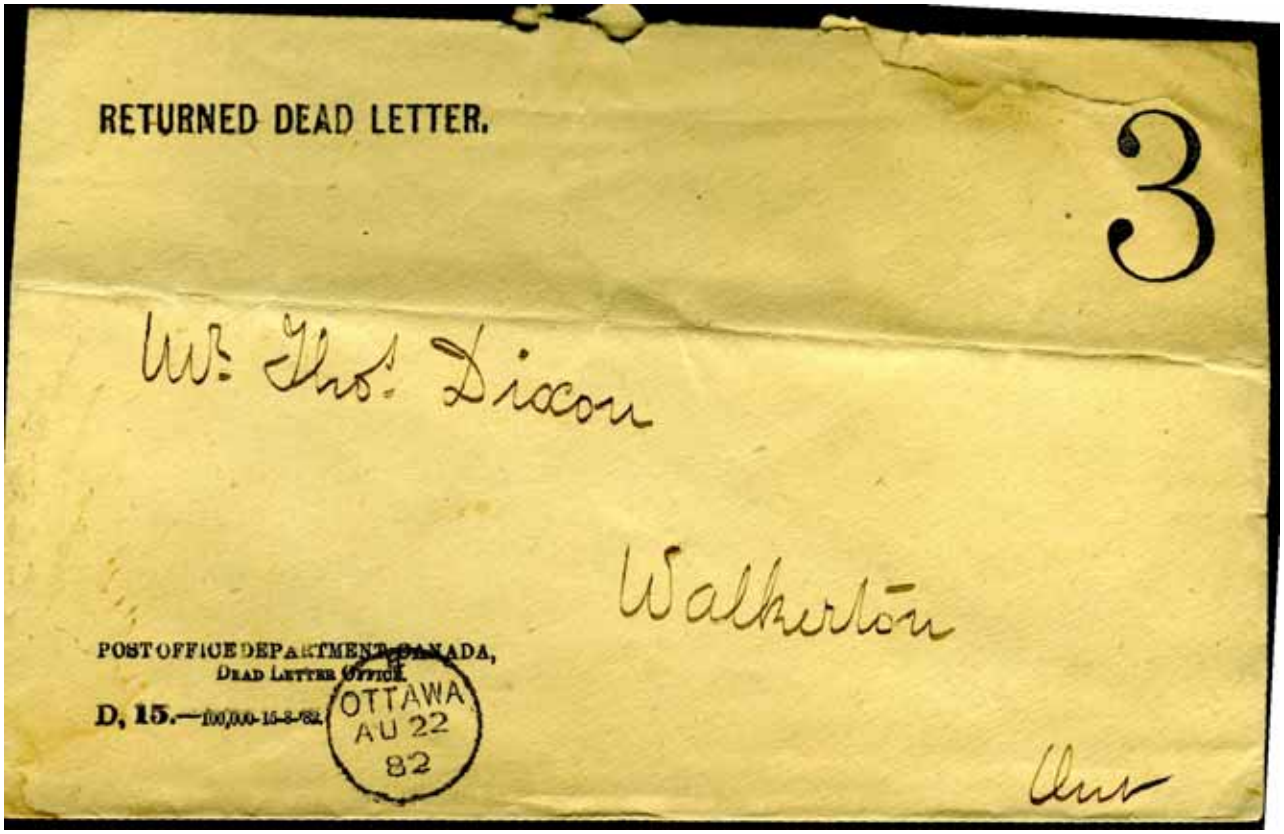


Returned registered to Stratford (*ON*), My 1879. Print data: D. 15½—10,000-11-10-'78. Relatively low print run for this size, and odd form number. Charged 3¢ return service fee (but nothing for registration).

Unusual rate marking



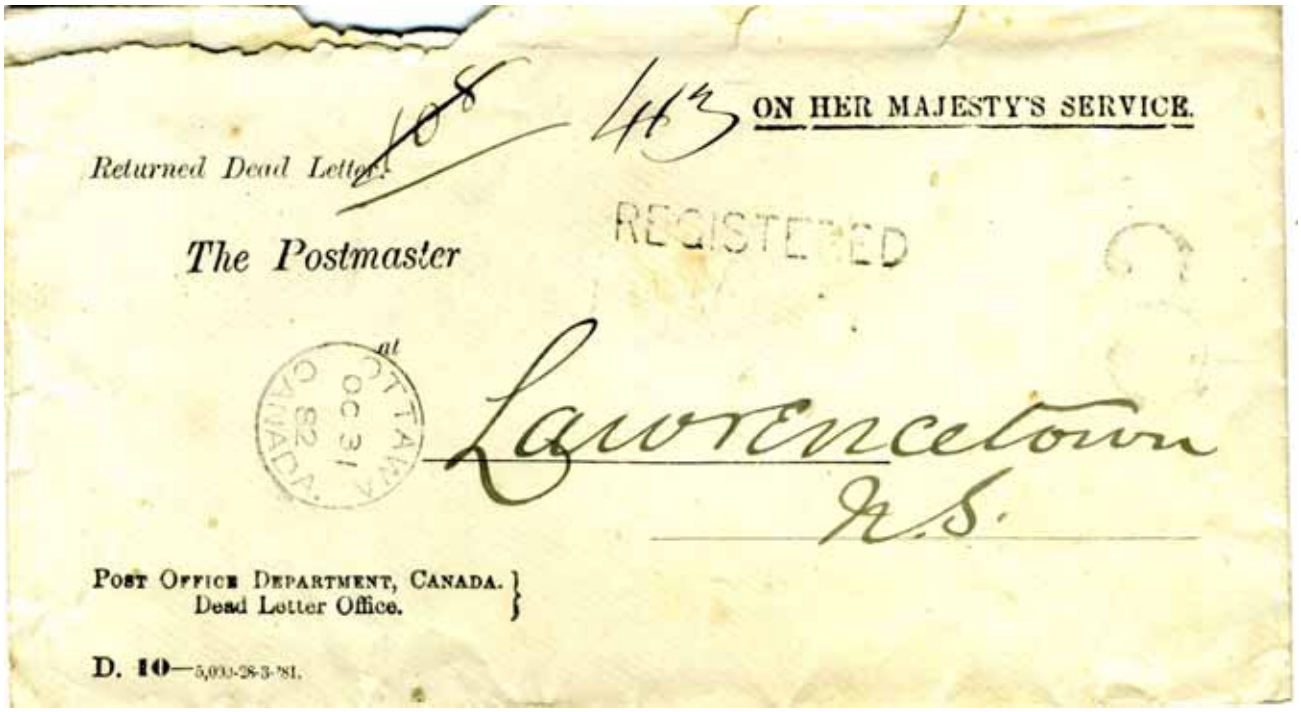
Returned to Montreal, May 1882. Print data: D, 15—100,000-1-12-81. (comma after **D**) Charged 3¢ fee, using flattened and extremely clear **3**. Compare with normal 3 below. *Two examples known* (same print data).



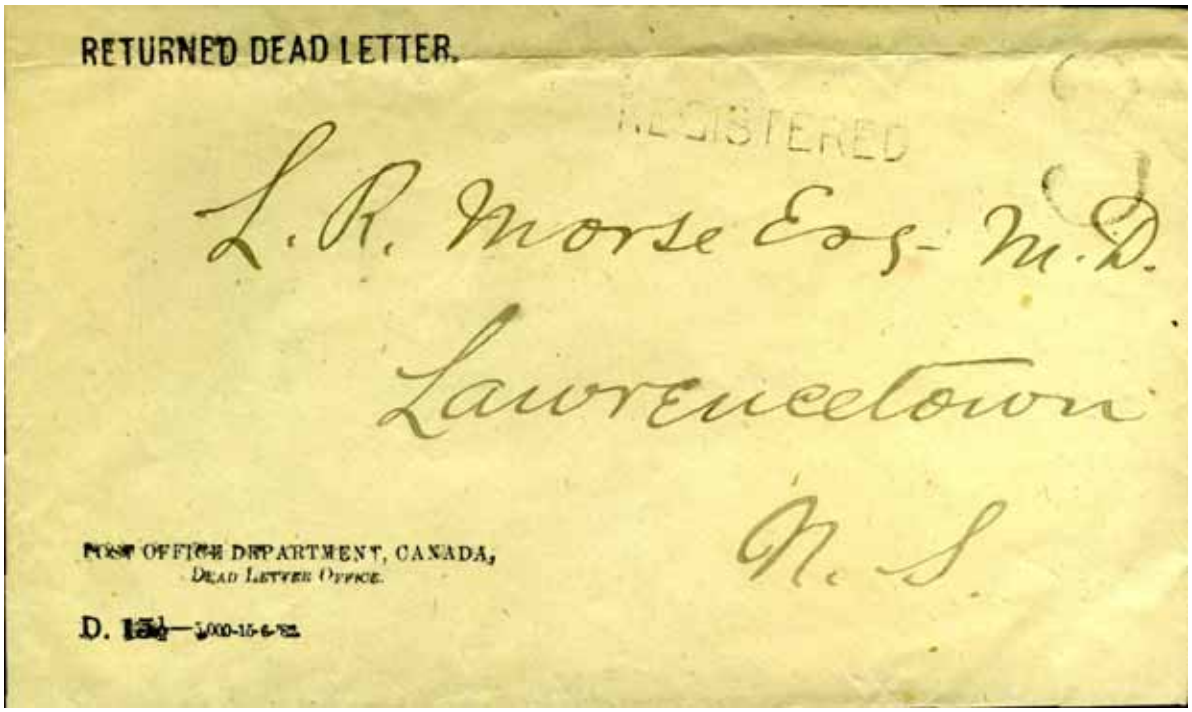
Returned to Walkerton (*ON*), August 1882. Print data: D, 15—100,000-15-3-82. Charged 3¢ service fee, with clear normal **3**.

Registered

Both returned to same town, the top one to the postmaster (special form envelope, D. 10). No additional charge for return of registered letters by registered mail. Both low print quantities for this size envelope.



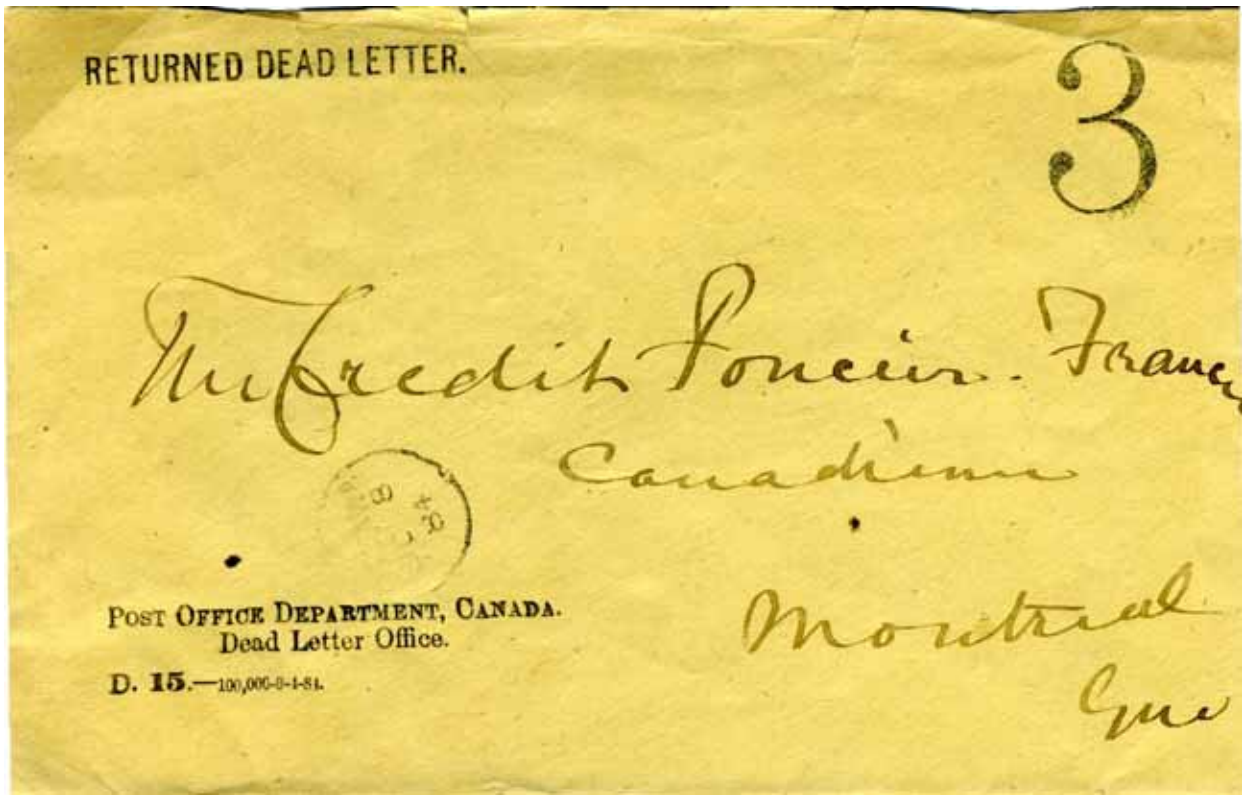
Returned to PM at Lawrencetown (*NS*), October 1882. Print data: D. 10—5,000-26-3-'81. Low print run (addressed to PM). Charged 3¢ service fee.



Returned to Lawrencetown, undated. Print data: D. 15½—5,000-15-6-'82. Charged 3¢ service fee.

Illegible return address?

If the undeliverable cover has a return address, it should be returned directly to the sender (rather than to the D L O); however, in this case, either the return address could not be read or the cover was erroneously sent to the D L O.



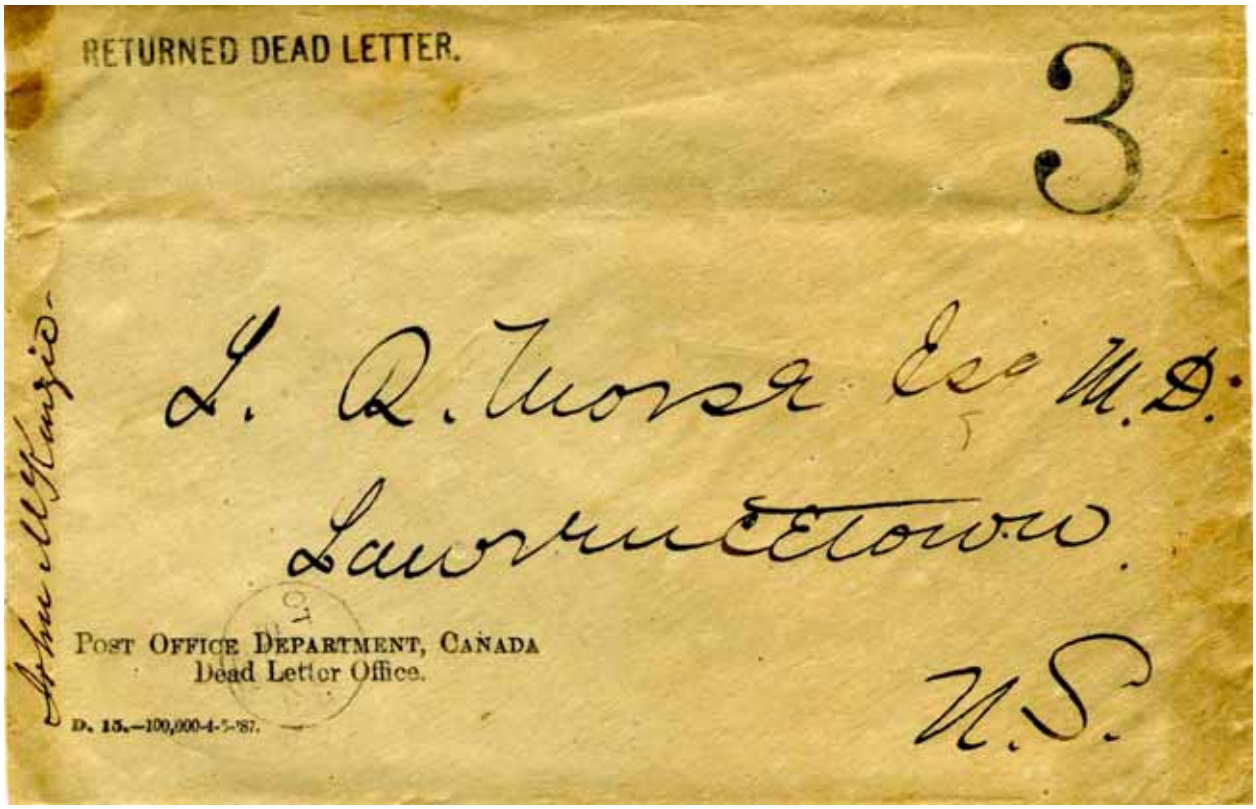
Returned to Montreal, October 1884. Print data: D. 15.—100,000-9-4-84. Charged 3¢ service fee. Enclosed cover below.

Blow-up of return address handstamp (in blue) on reverse. Seems legible enough. Faint D L O circle datestamp on reverse.

Montreal to Sorel (*QC*), August 1884 (held at Sorel until 2 October, when handstamp NOT·CALLED·FOR applied). Handstamped blue return address on reverse apparently not legible, so cover sent to D L O.

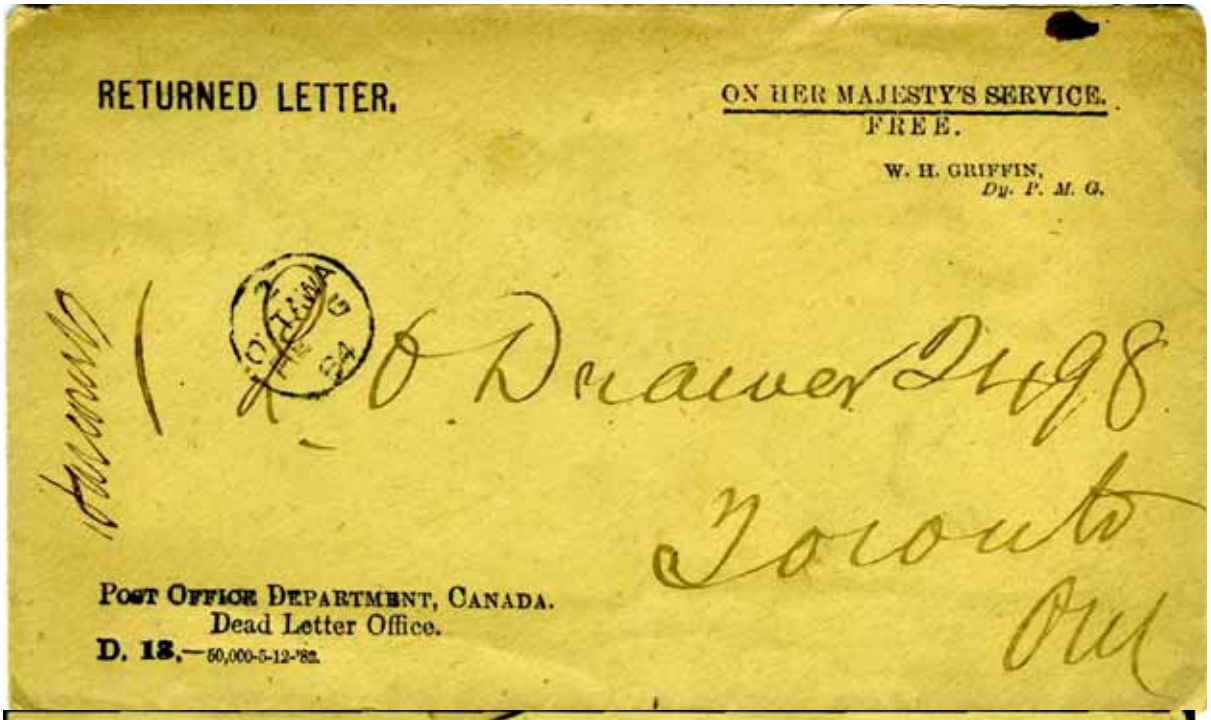
Returned from US (with enclosure)

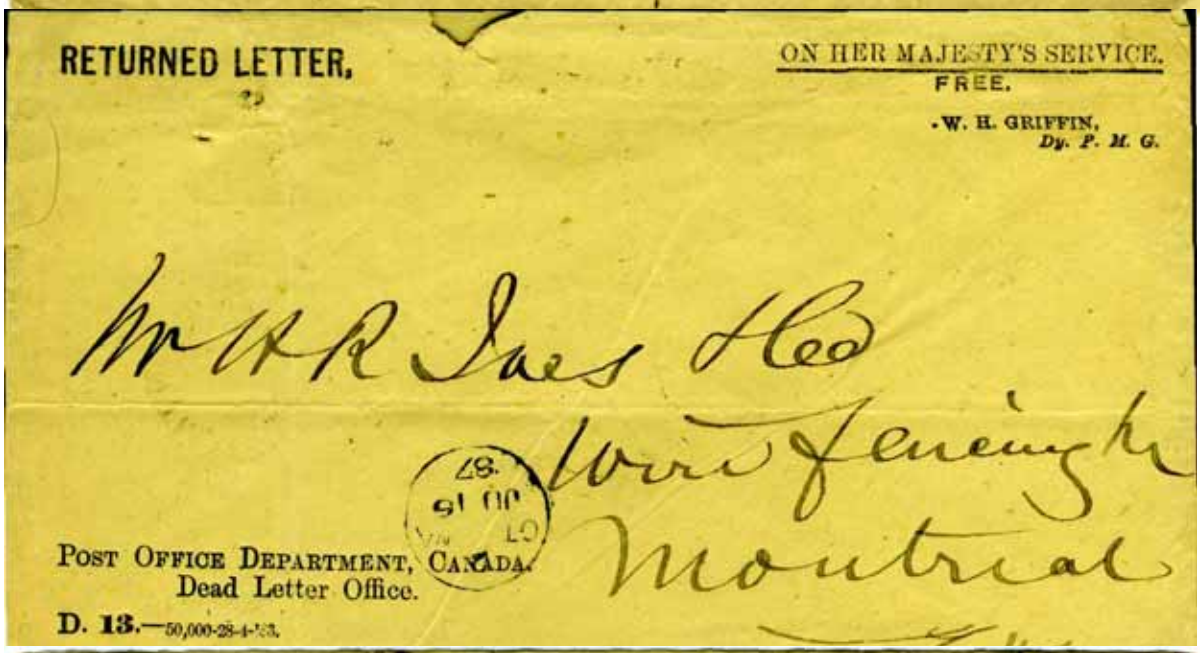
There was no additional surcharge (above the standard 3¢) for items returned from abroad.



Returned to Lawrencetown (*NS*) *from Bangor* (*ME*), February 1888. Print data: D. 15.—100,000-4-5-'87. Charged 3¢ service fee. Docketed *John McKenzie* at right. Enclosed cover below.

Lawrencetown to Bangor, November 1887. Postage 3¢ to US. Circle ADVERTISED NOV 19 1887, applied at Bangor. Canadian D L O 2 * is D L O shift marking (numbers 1–3). US D L O handstamp and one Canadian broken circle D L O.





Returned free, 1884, 1887, & 1889 (D.13)

First two likely letters sent to an official (who could not be found) in the federal government.

Service charge no longer applied to letters returned to the US by this time (bottom cover).

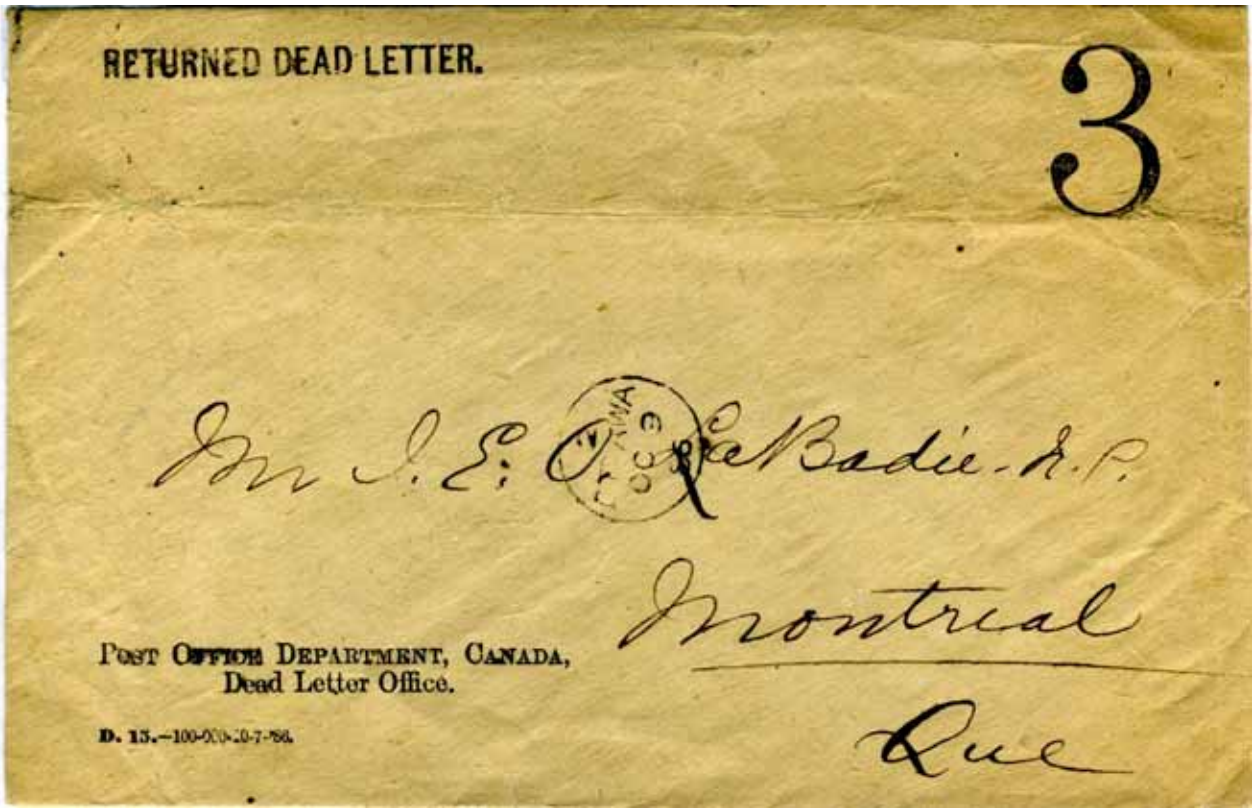
Returned to Toronto, February 1884. Print data: D. 13.—50,000-5-12-'82. Printed FREE. is serifed.

Returned to Montreal, June 1887. Print data: D. 13.—50,000-28-4-'83. Printed FREE. is nonserif.

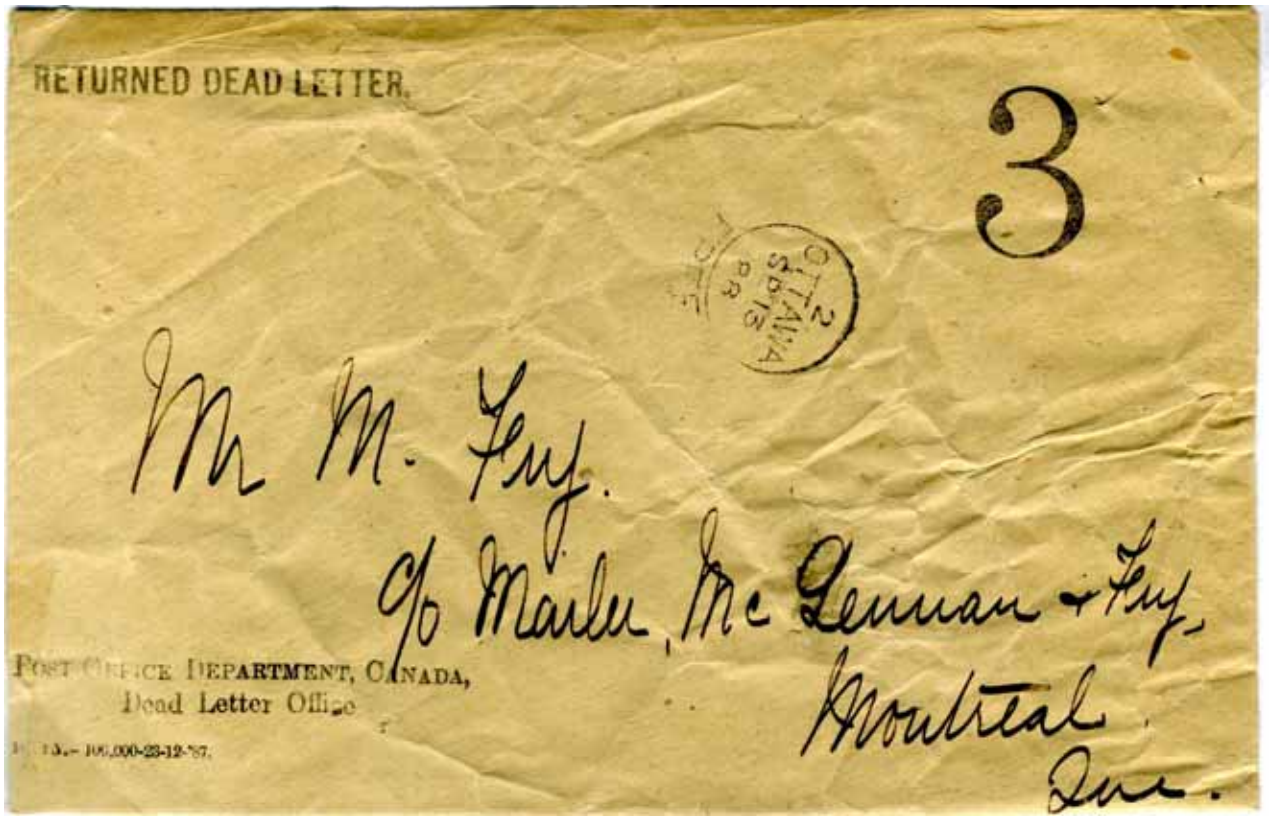
Returned to Scranton, February 1889. Print data: D. 13.—50,000-5-6-'84. Printed FREE. is nonserif. Five years after printing.

Slight printing changes

Both covering envelopes are intact. The lower one has the printing shifted about one centimetre to the left, and moreover, the D L O incantation on the flap (*The enclosed Dead Letter is returned by direction of the Postmaster General for the reason theoron assigned)* is upright, as opposed to being inverted (which occurs on all preceding covering envelopes).



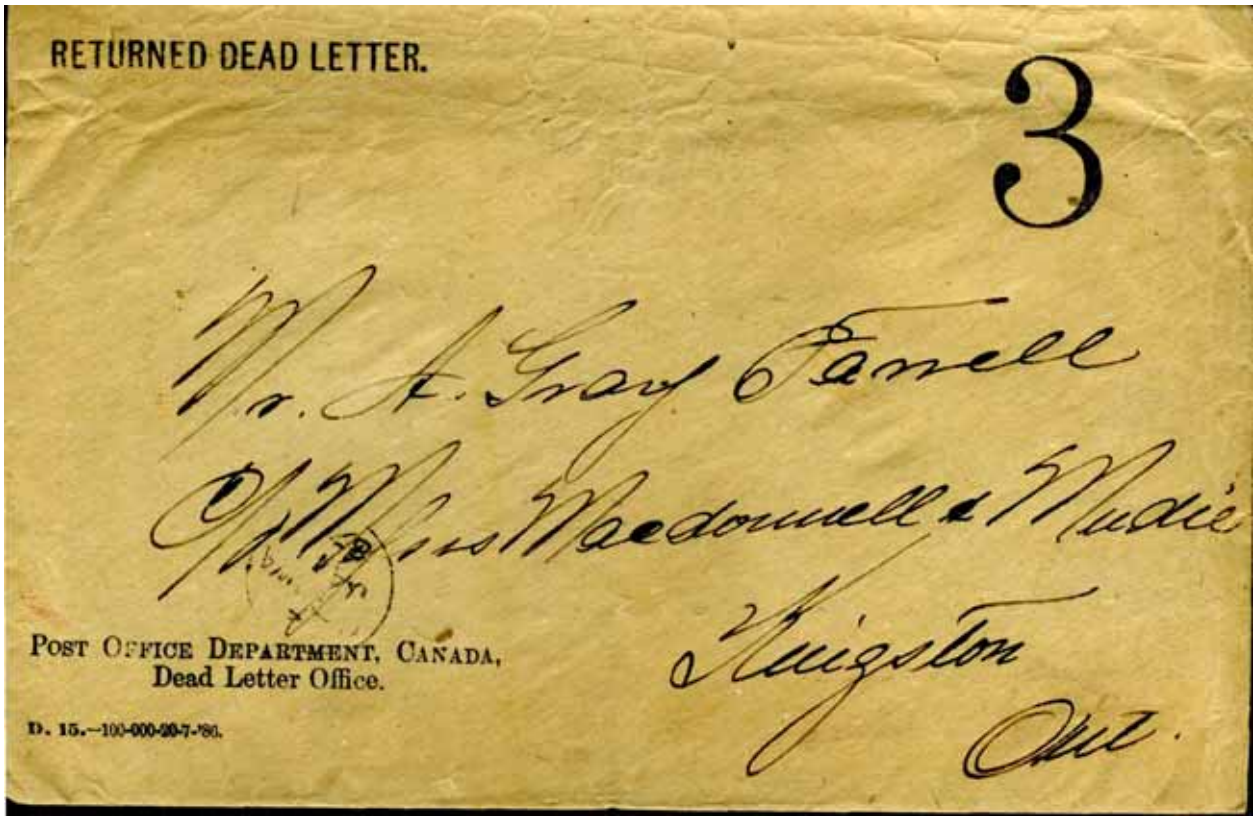
Returned to Montreal, October 1886. Print data: D. 15.—100,000-20-7-'86. Charged 3¢ service fee.



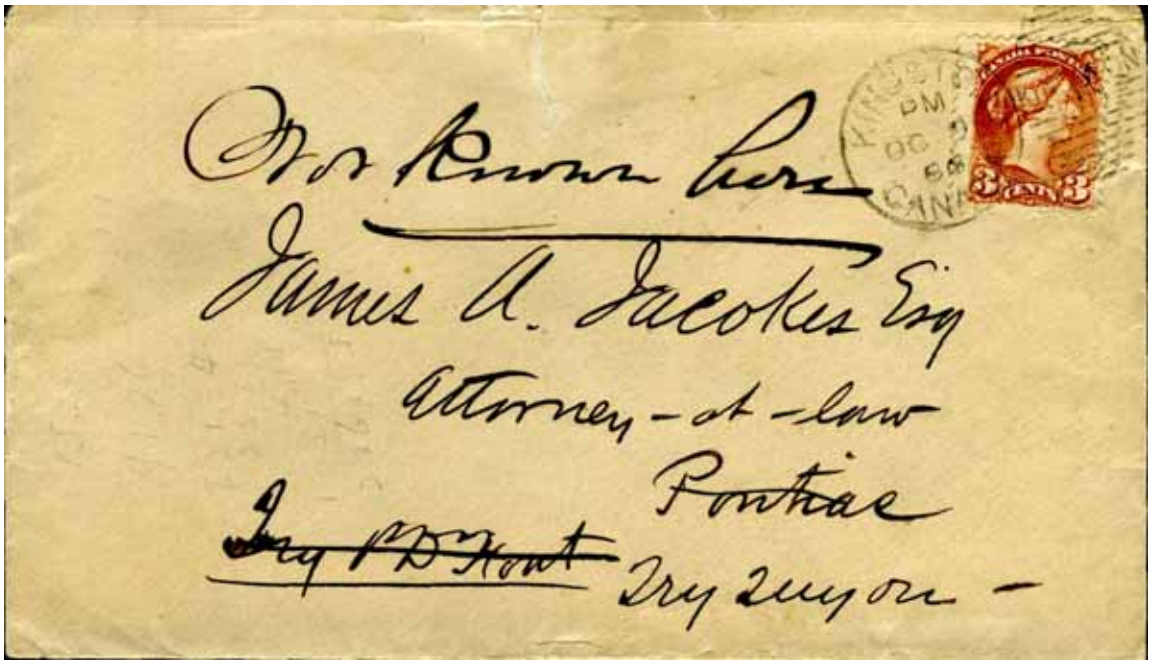
Returned to Montreal, September 1888. Print data: D. 15.—100,000-23-12-'87. Charged 3¢ service fee. Print shifted to left.

With enclosure (1887)

Print shifted to left and DLO incantation upright on flap; this is the *same* print data as the covering envelope on previous page—which did not have the shift, and for which the flap inscription was inverted.



Returned to Kingston, January 1887. Print data: D. 15.—100,000–20-7-86. Charged 3¢ service fee. Enclosed cover below.



Kingston to Pontiac, forwarded, October 1886. Ms *Not known here* likely applied at Bryson (presumably a misreading of *Try Quyon*).

Dead Letter Office broken circles and faint REC'D AT DEAD LETTER OFFICE . . . circle.

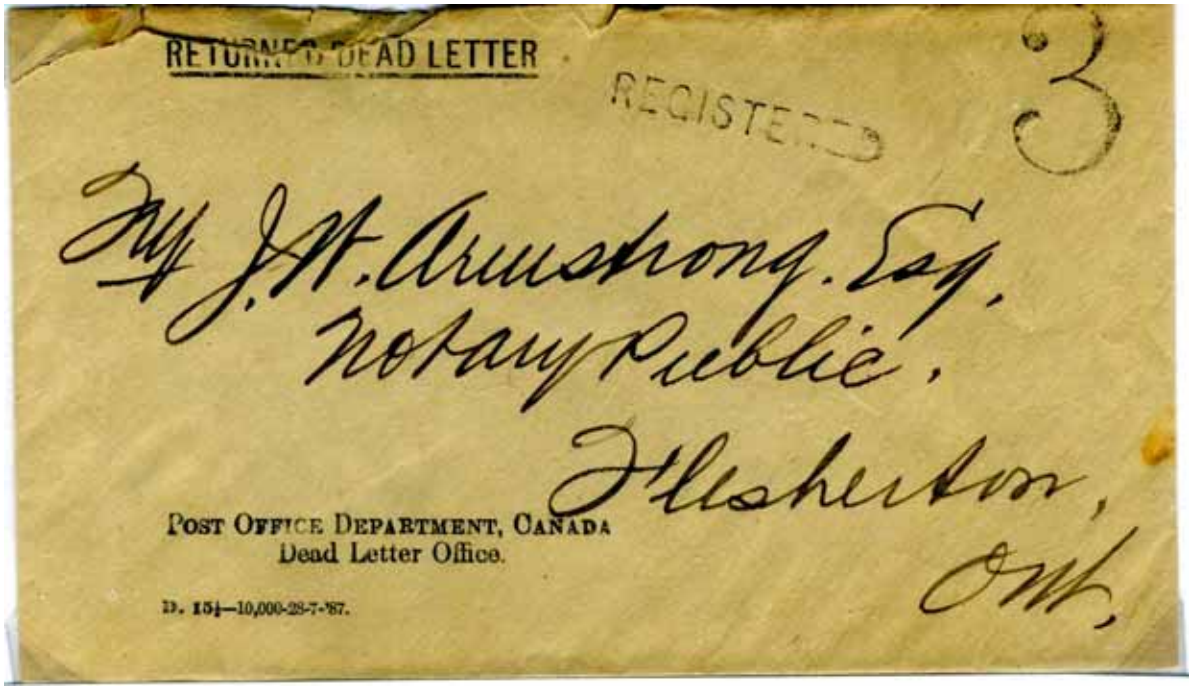
Double enclosure (1889)

In the period 1868–1898, very few examples known of two (or more) dead letters returned in the same covering envelope.

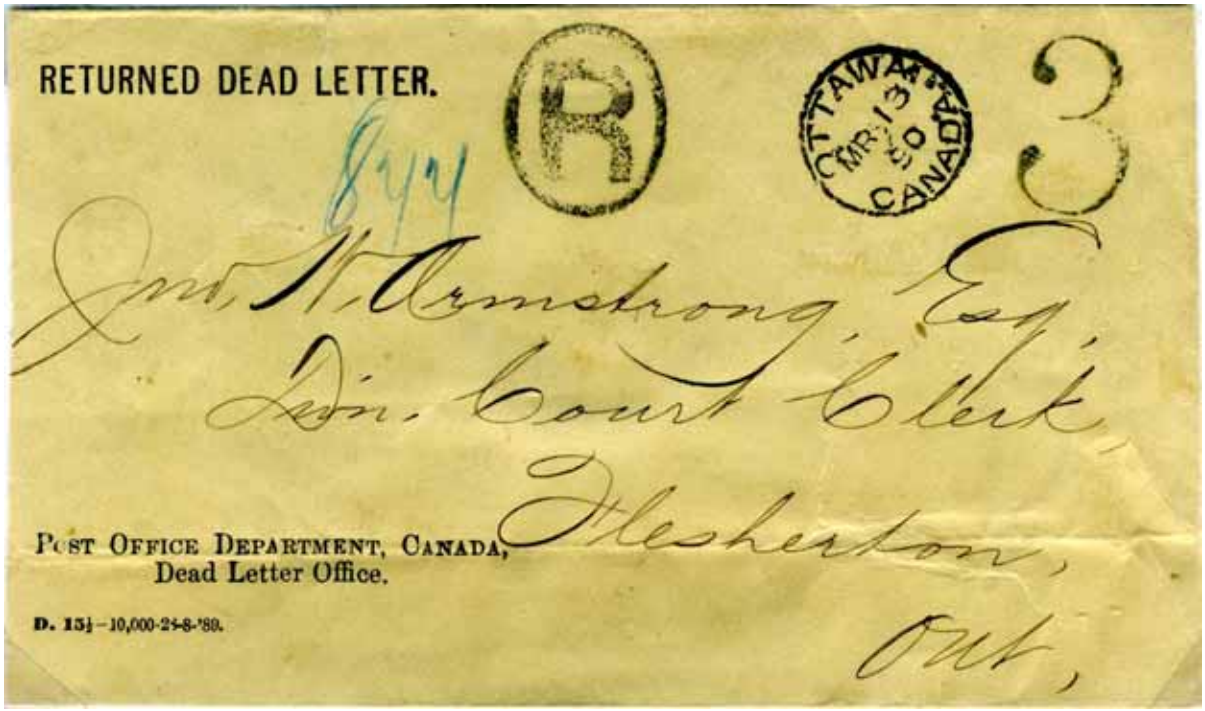
Returned to Port Arthur (*ON*), December 1889. Print data: D. $20\frac{1}{2}$—5,000-18-2-'86. Usual (for this large size) nonserif incantation on flap. Charged **6**¢, for two dead letters returned to sender.

Registered (1889 & 1890)

Returned to same sender; addressed by same clerk (different pens). These and all subsequent covering envelopes have the incantation on the flap upright. Obvious differences in location of printed data.

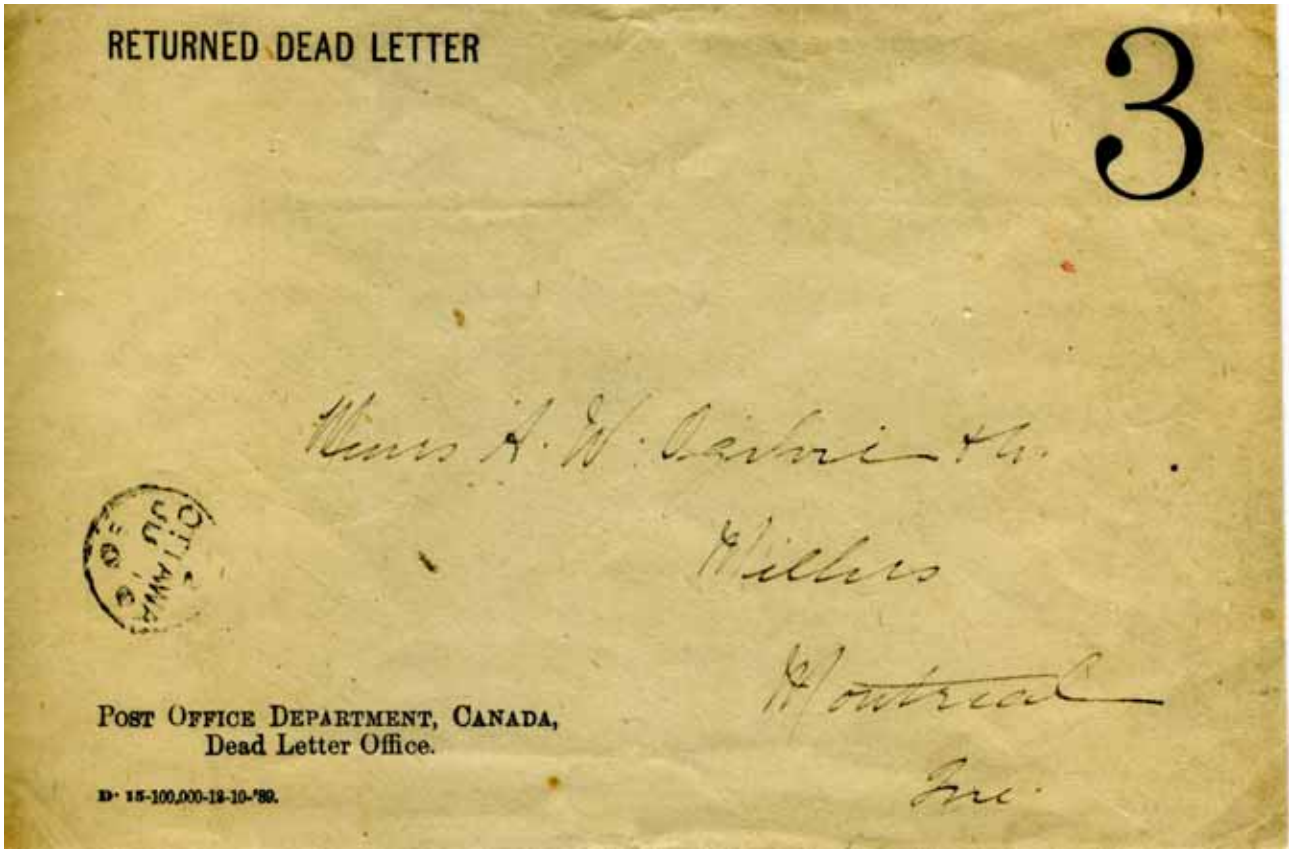


Returned to Flesherton (*ON*), undated. Print data: D. 15½—10,000–28-7-'87. Charged 3¢ service fee.

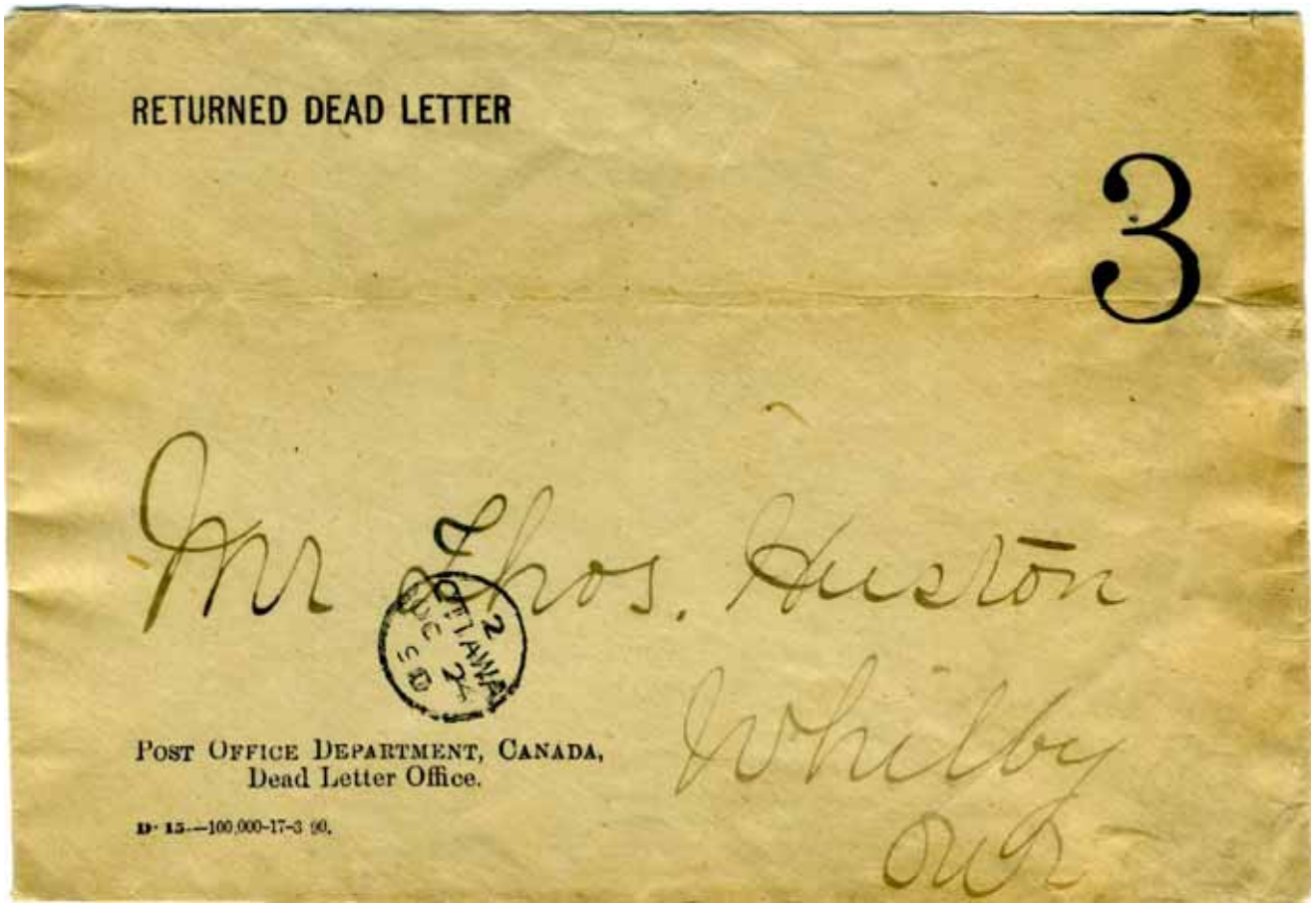


Returned to Flesherton, March 1890. Print data: D. 15½—10,000–24-8-'89. Returned registered letter. Charged 3¢ service fee.

Larger D15 form envelopes (1889 & 1890)

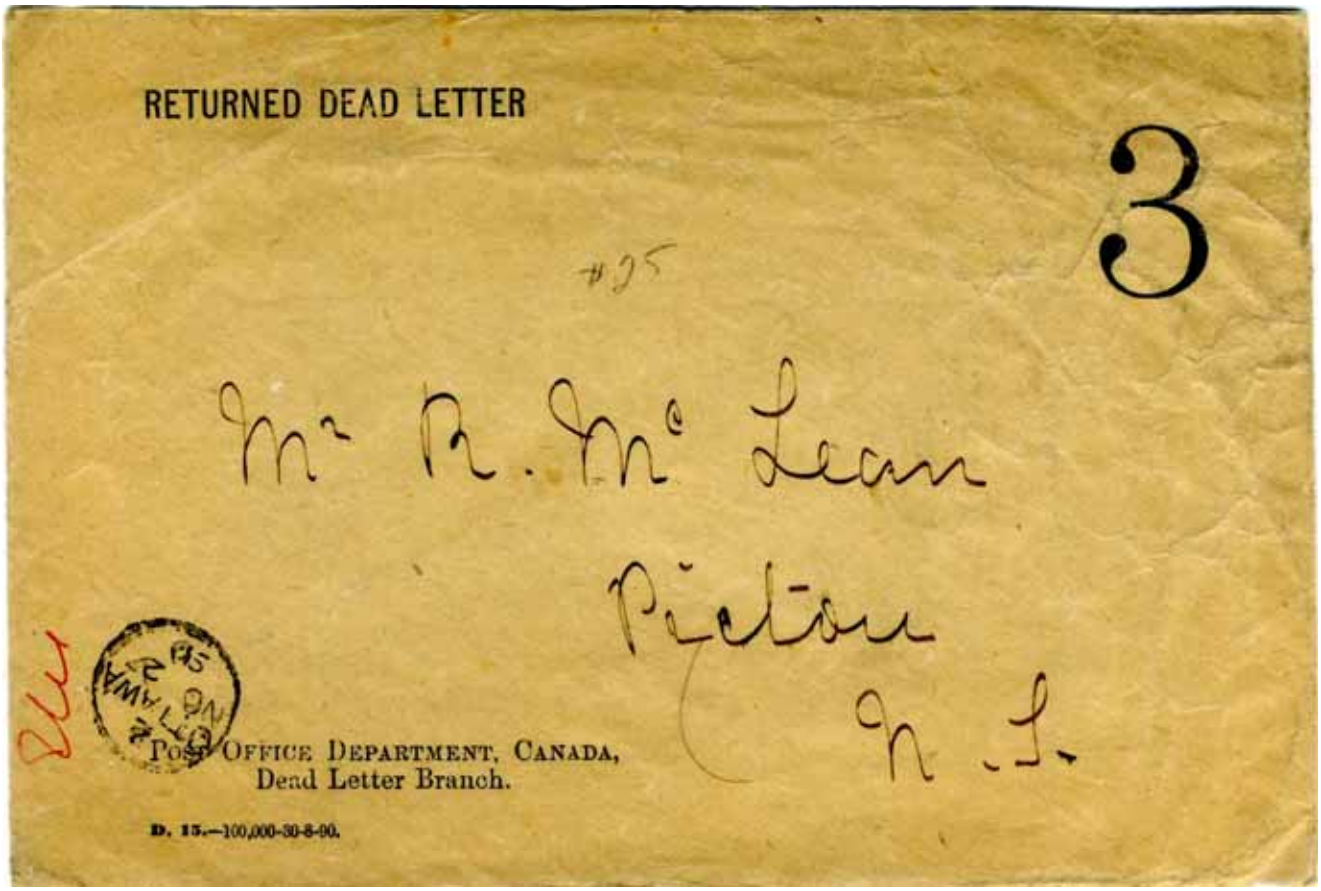


Returned to Montreal, June 1890. Print data: D. 15—100,000–18-10-'89. Charged 3¢ service fee.

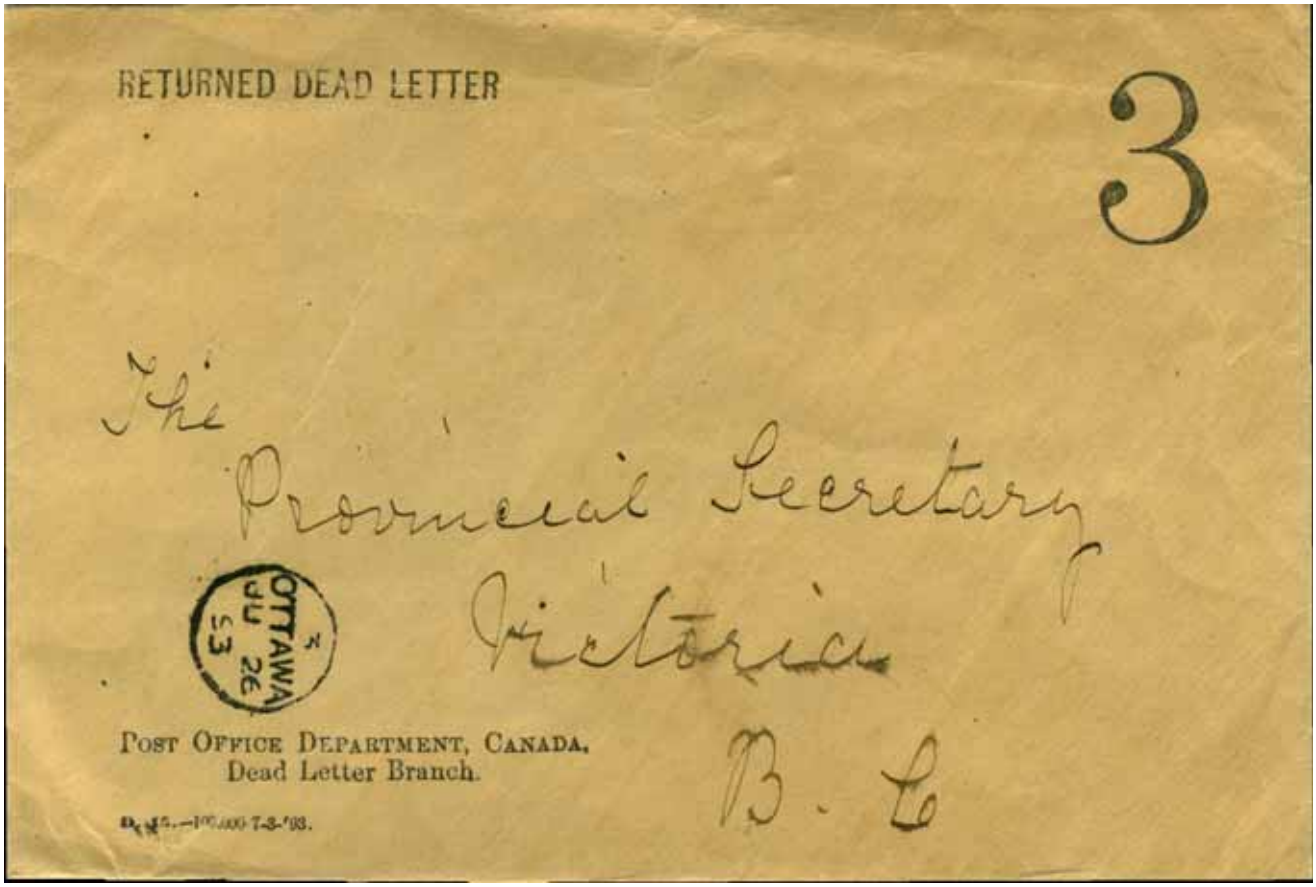


Returned to Whitby (*ON*), June 1893. Print data: D. 15—100,000–7-3 90. Charged 3¢ service fee.

Dead Letter **Office** changed to Dead Letter **Branch** (1890)



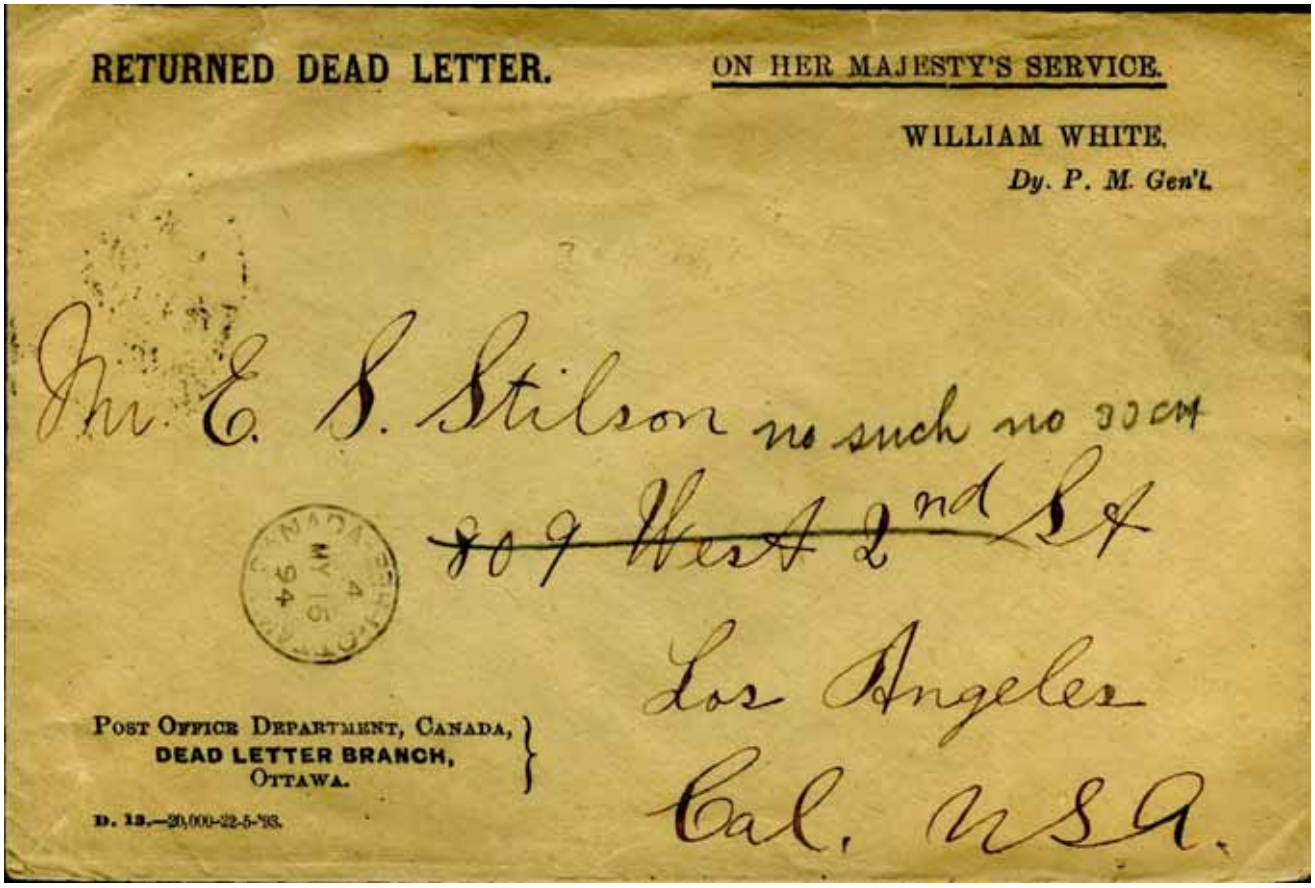
Returned to Pictou (*NS*), November 1890. Print data: D. 15—100,000–30-8-90. Charged 3¢ service fee.



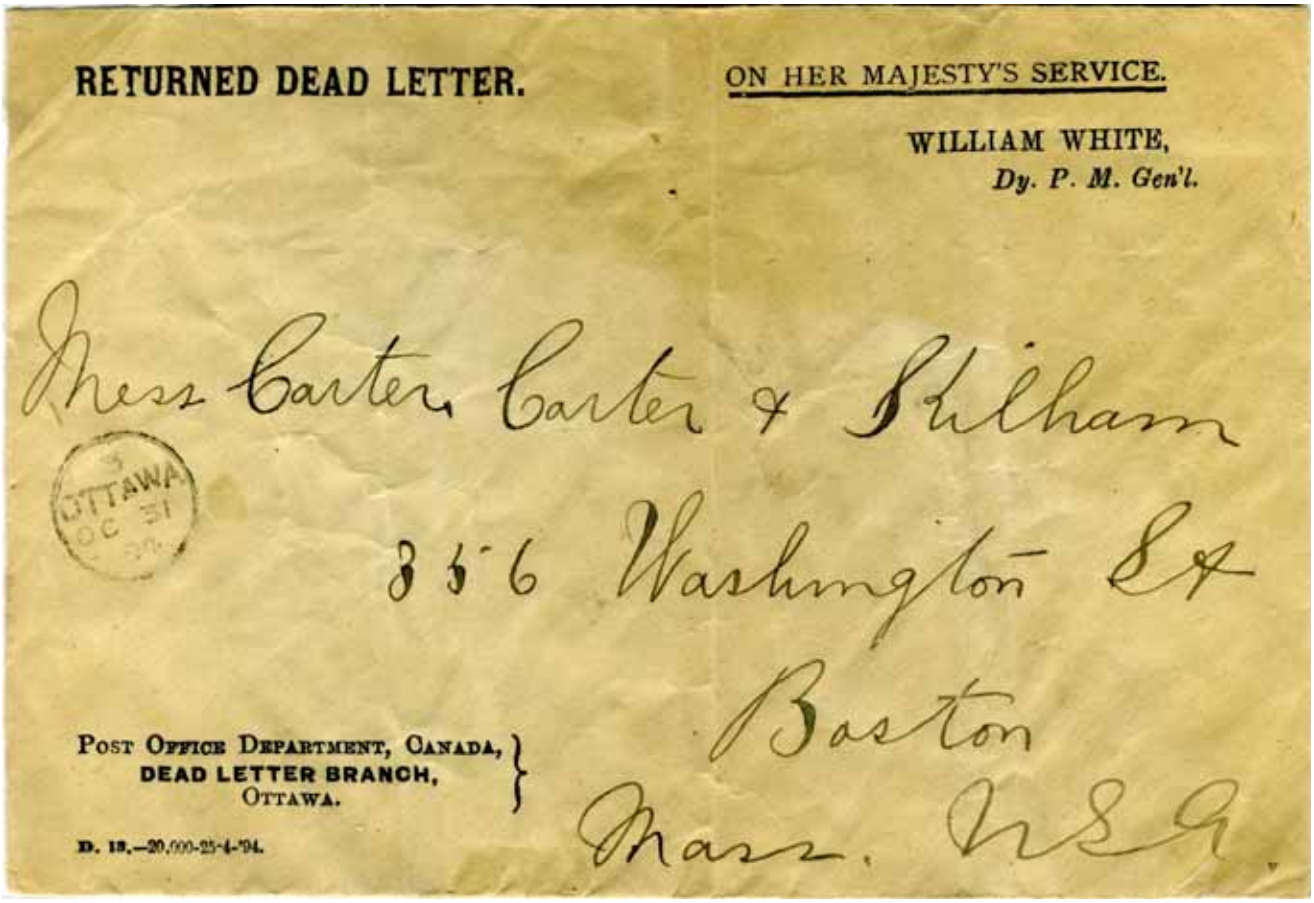
Returned to Victoria, June 1893. Print data: D. 15—100,000–7-3-'93. Charged 3¢ service fee.

Returned to the US (1894)

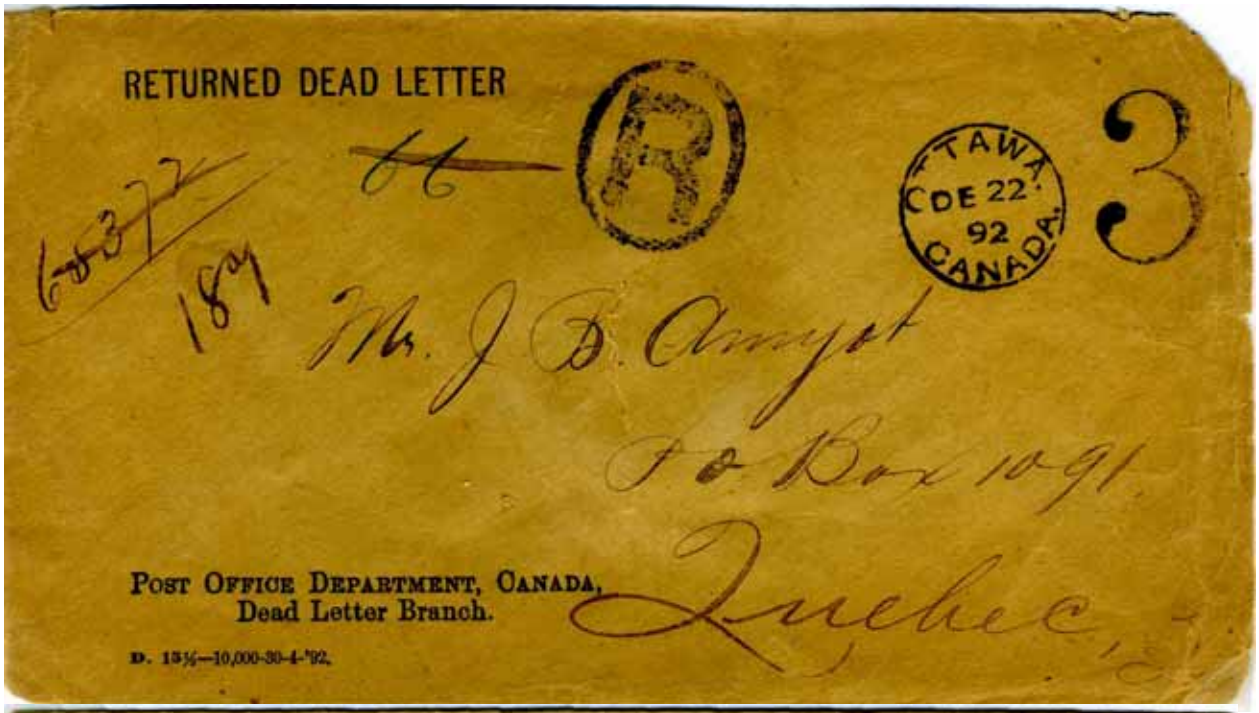
Addressed by same clerk. As usual, no fee for letters returned from abroad.



Returned to Los Angeles, itself misaddressed, May 1894. Print data: D. 13—20,000–22-5-'93.

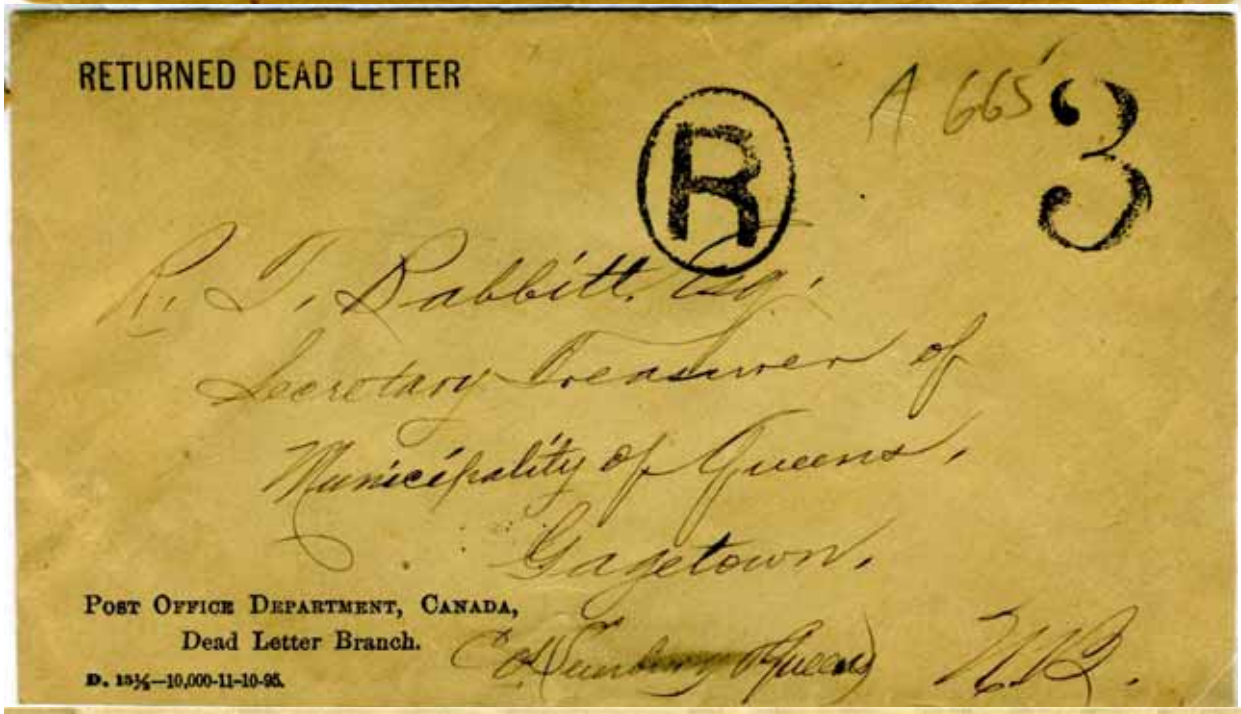


Returned to Boston, October 1894. Print data: D. 13—20,000–25-4-'94.

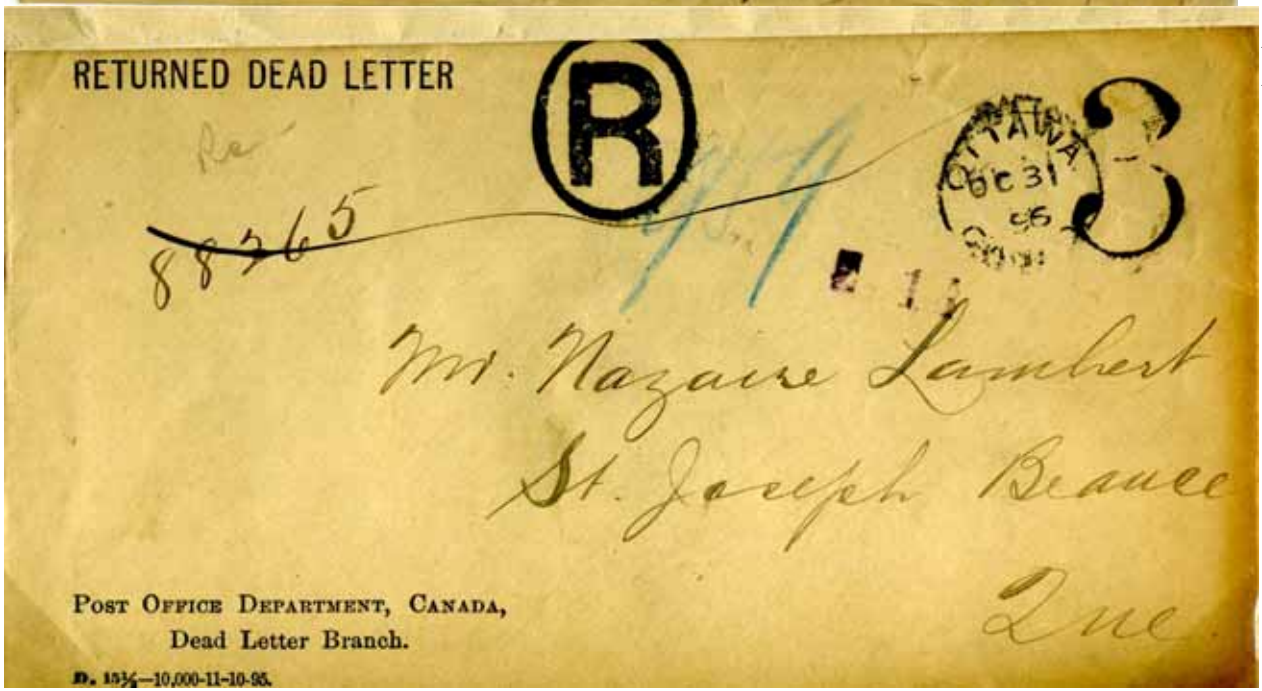


Registered (1892 & 1896)

Returned to Quebec, December 1892. Print data: D. 15½—10,000-20-4-'92. Red D L O wax seal.



Returned to Gagetown (*NB*), undated. Print data: D. 15½—10,000-11-10-95. No backstamps.



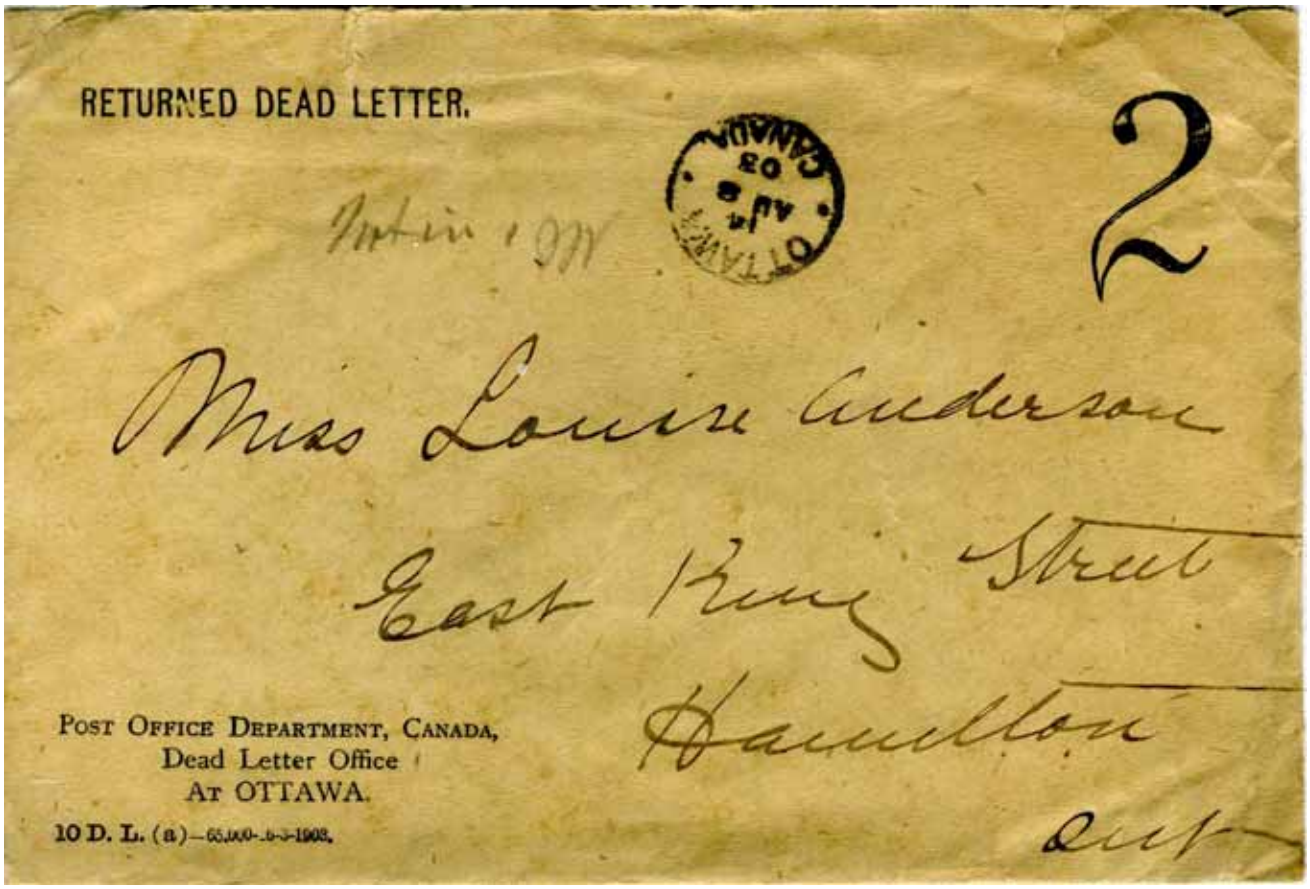
Returned to St-Joseph-Beauce (*QC*), October 1896. Print data as above. Red D L O wax seal.

Dead letter office branch system introduced (1 July 1898)

Instead of a single centralized D L O in Ottawa, *branch* D L Os were opened in various cities (as were *local* D L Os, but these did not handle returned letter covering envelopes): Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Victoria (more added later). Correspondingly, print data alpha-numeric codes became more complicated. Earlier in the year (1 January), the returned letter service fee had dropped to 2¢.

In the mid-1930s, branches were replaced by districts.

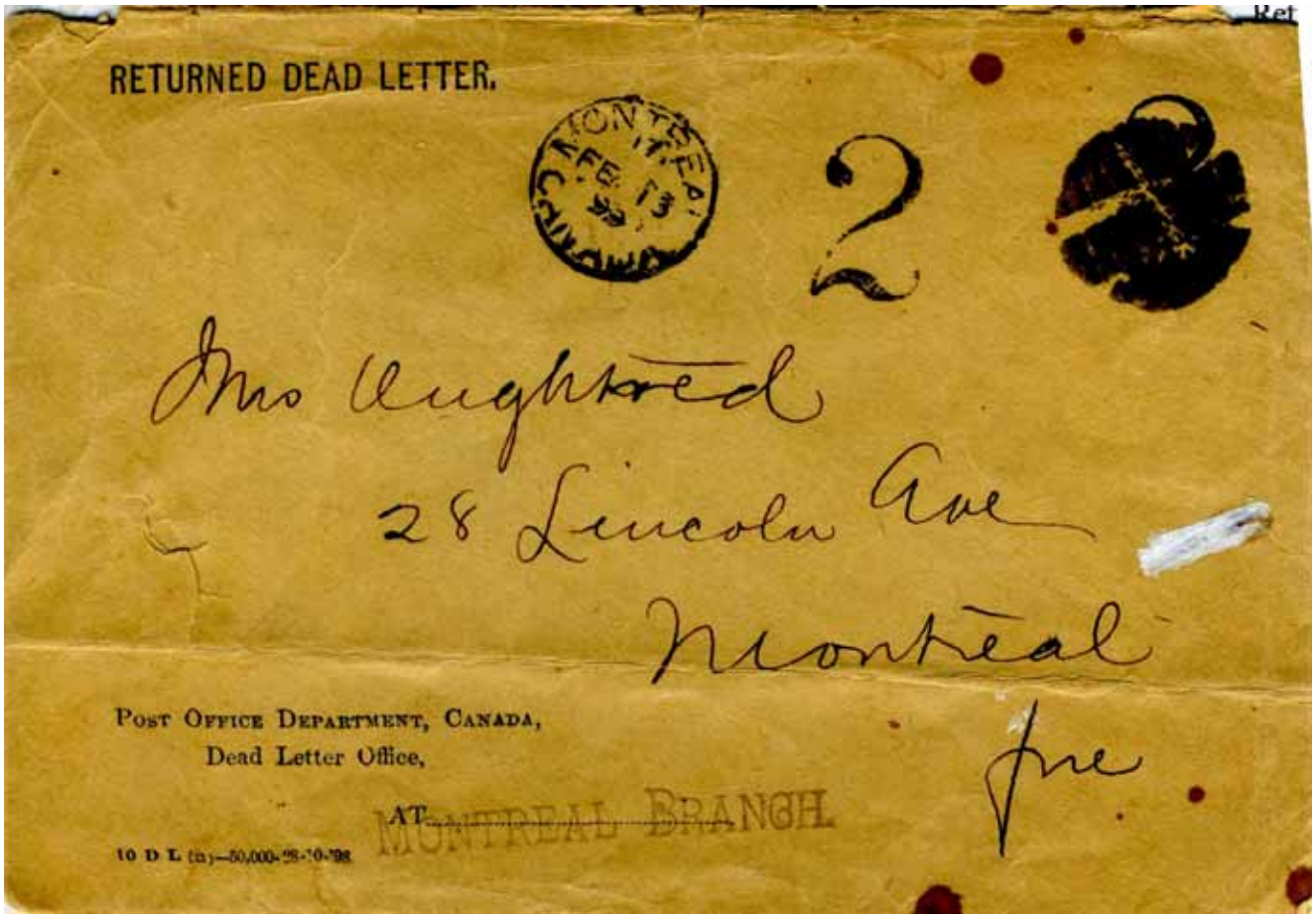
Ottawa branch office, with enclosure, returned from US



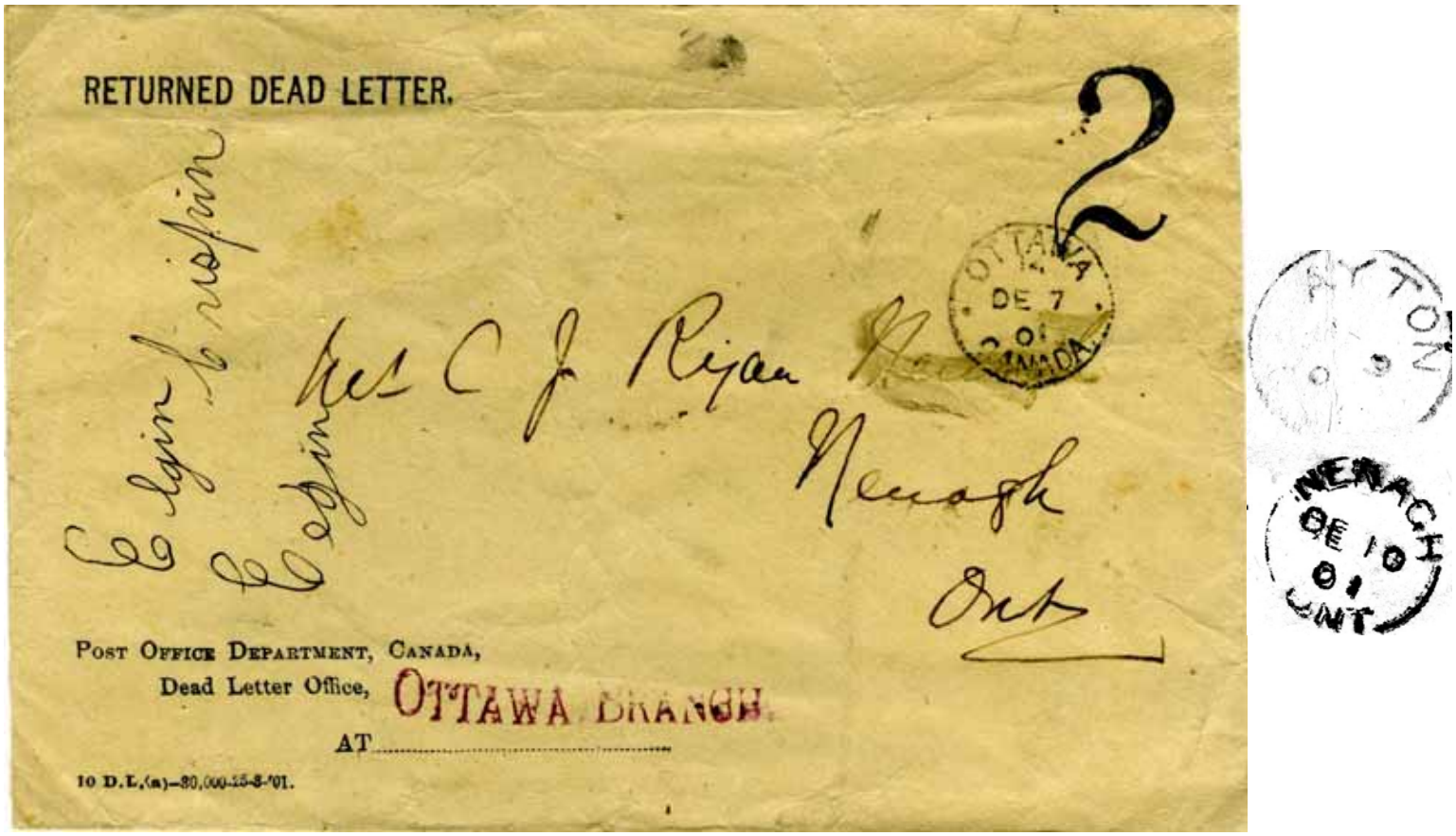
Returned to Hamilton, August 1903. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—65,000–6-5-1903. Charged 2¢ fee.

Hamilton to New York, June 1903. NY PO double oval ADV. / DUE ONE CENT. (not paid) for advertising, and PARTI / LEFT / N.Y.-P.D.

Returned from Montreal and Ottawa branch offices



Returned to Montreal, February 1899. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—50,000–28-10-'98; dot leader for stamped MONTREAL BRANCH. Rated 3¢ (odd—printed almost a year after the rate change), corrected to 2¢.



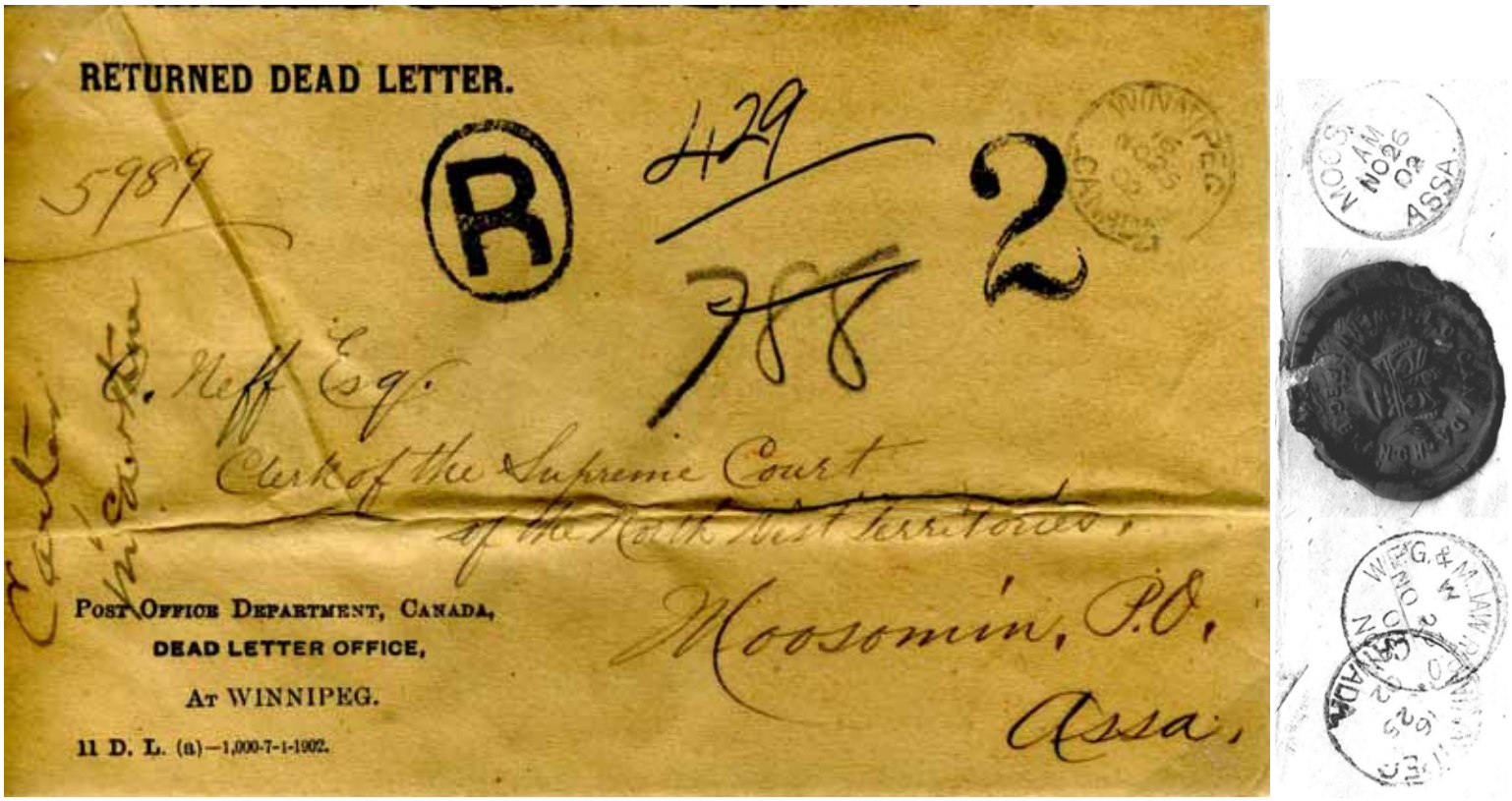
Returned to Nenagh (*ON*), February 1899. 10 D.L. (A)—30,000–25-3-'01; dot leader for OTTAWA BRANCH.

Returned from branch office

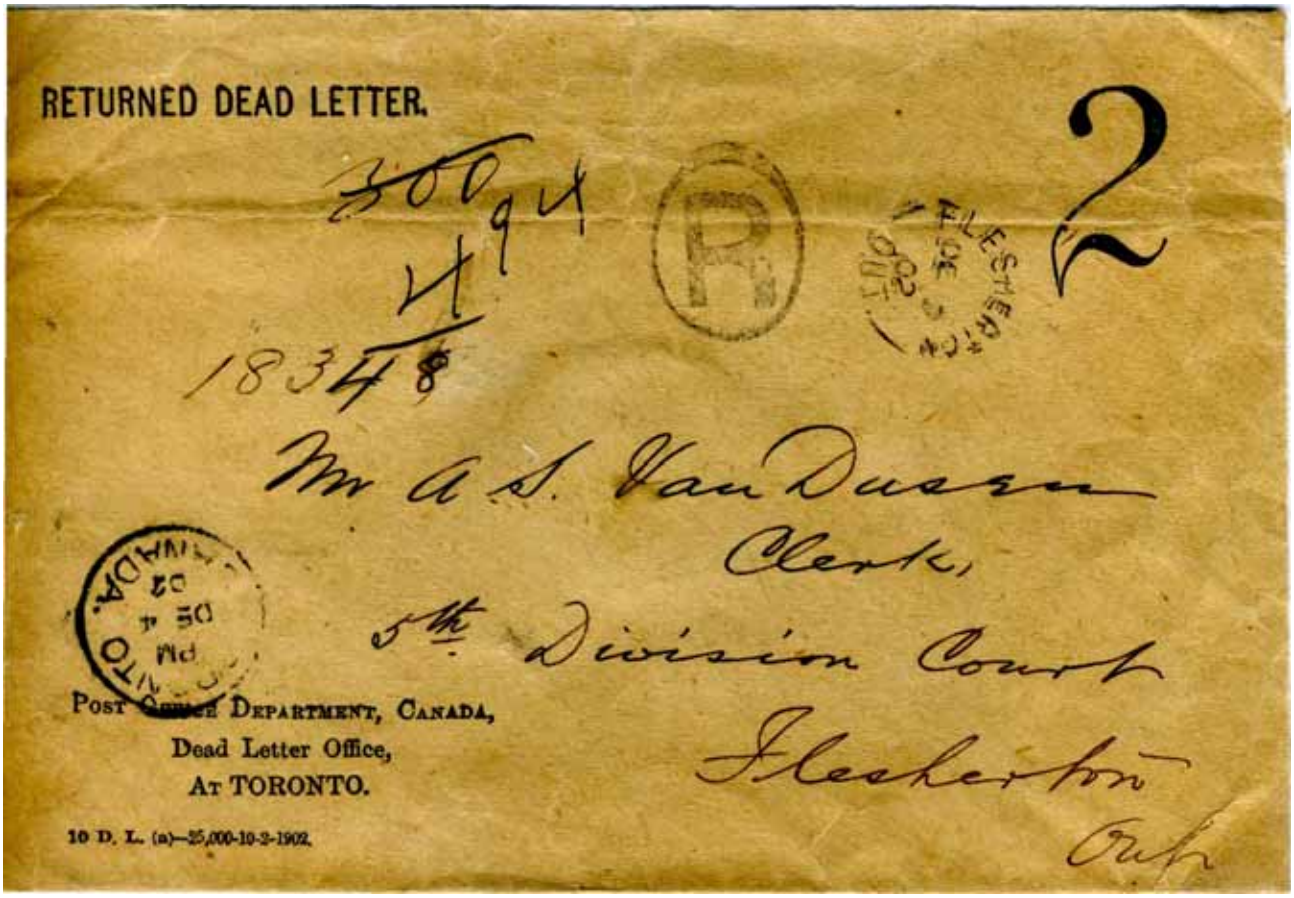
That the 2¢ fee was paid was indicated by the application of two 1¢ numerals, a role played by postage due stamps later. This is the only reported example of postage stamps being used in this way on a returned letter from the D L O prior to the issuance of postage due stamps (1906).

Returned to Saint John, forwarded to Summerside (*PEI*)*, then to Charlottetown,* April 1902. 10 D.L. (A)—10,000–8-1-1901, printed HALIFAX. Charged 2¢.

Returned, registered, from Winnipeg and Toronto branch offices



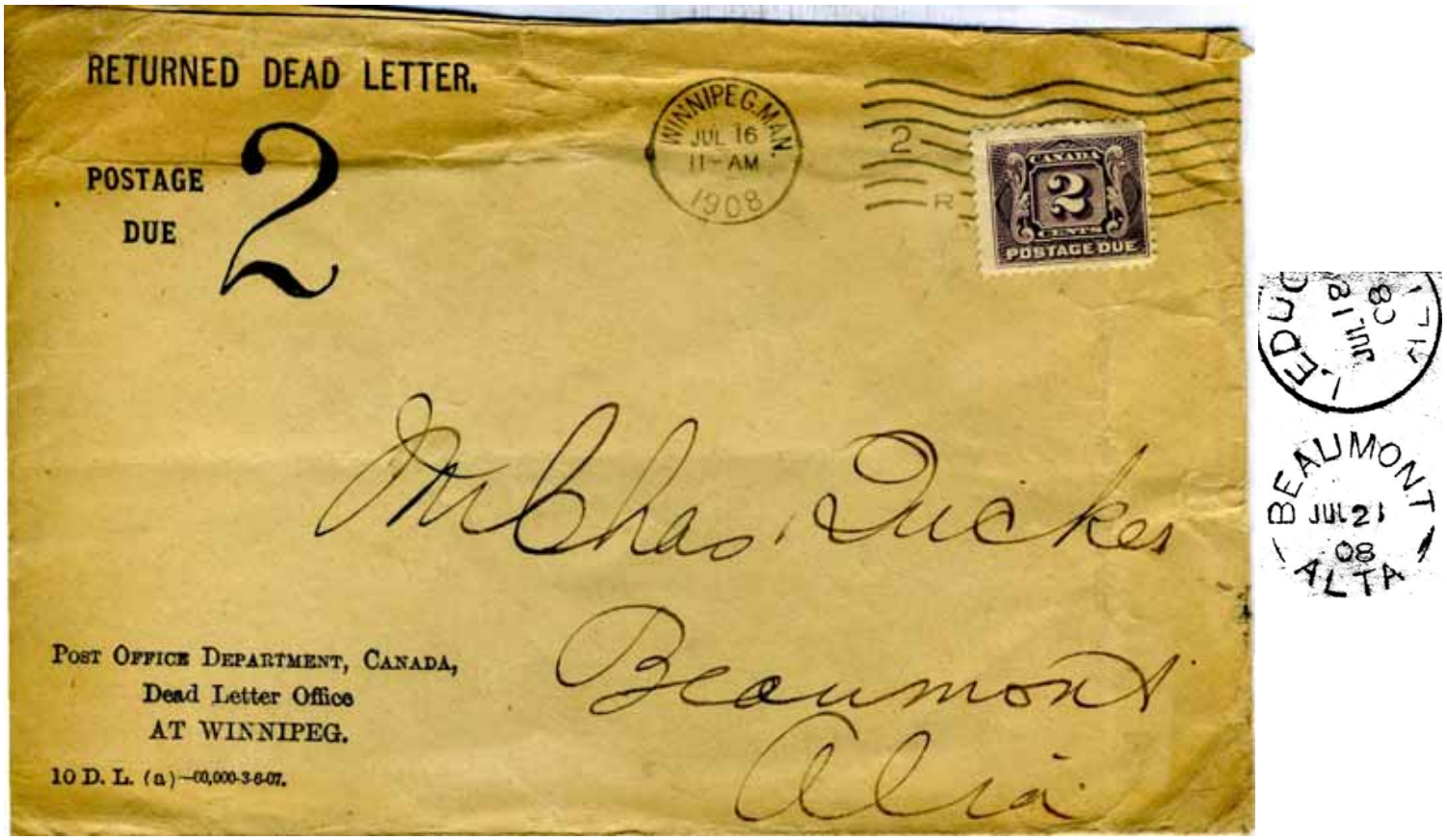
Returned to Moosomin (*Assiniboia*), *with very small print run* (1000), November 1902. Print data: 11 D.L. (A)—1,000–7-1-1902. Charged 2¢. With red wax seal of Winnipeg branch D L O.



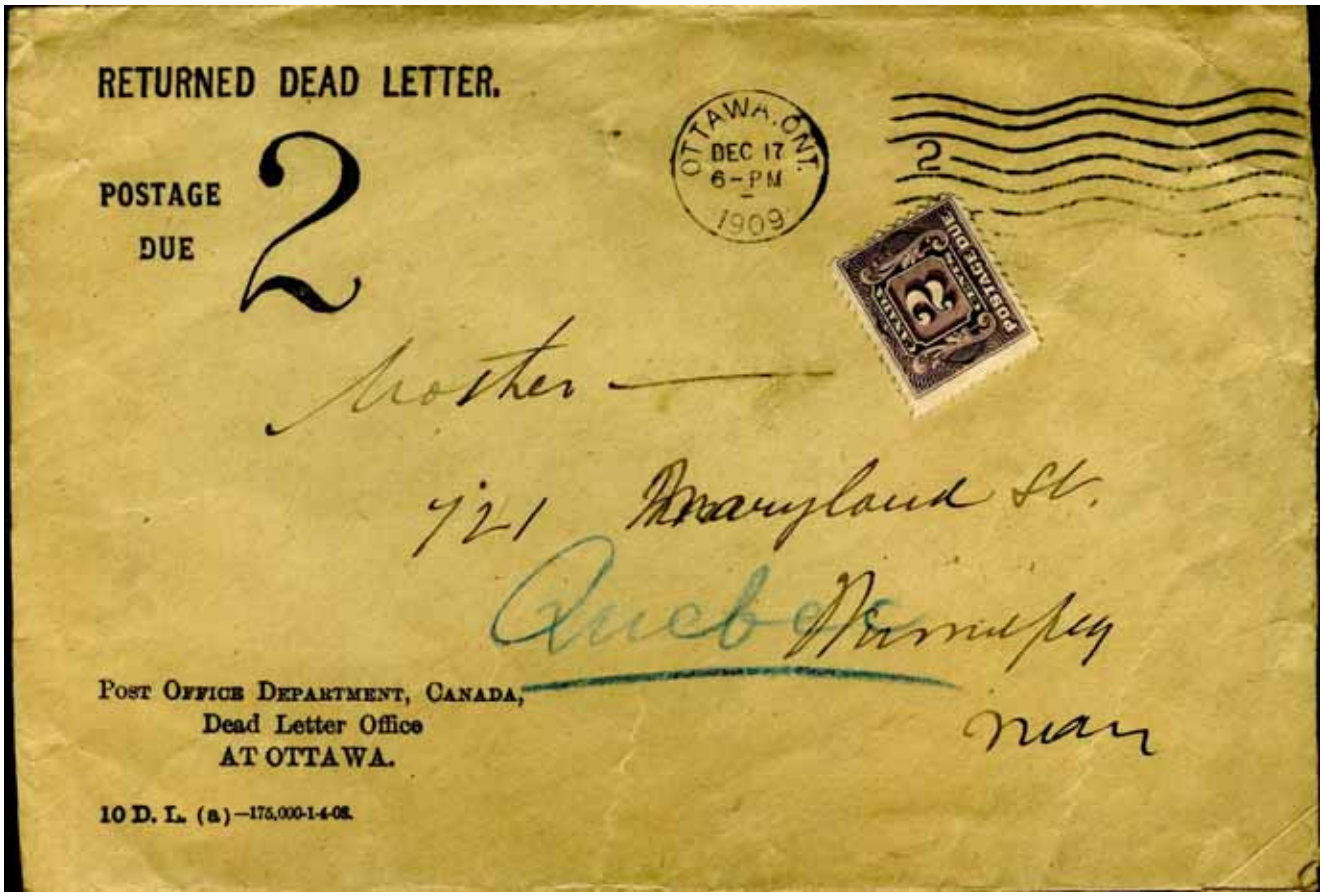
Returned to Flesherton (*ON*), December 1902. 10 D.L. (A)—25,000–10-2-1902. Charged 2¢.

Postage due stamps introduced

With postage due stamps (issued 1906), it became possible to indicate payment of the charges. However, they were not always applied.



Returned to Beaumont (*AB*)*, from Winnipeg,* July 1908. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—60,000–3-6-07. Charged 2¢.



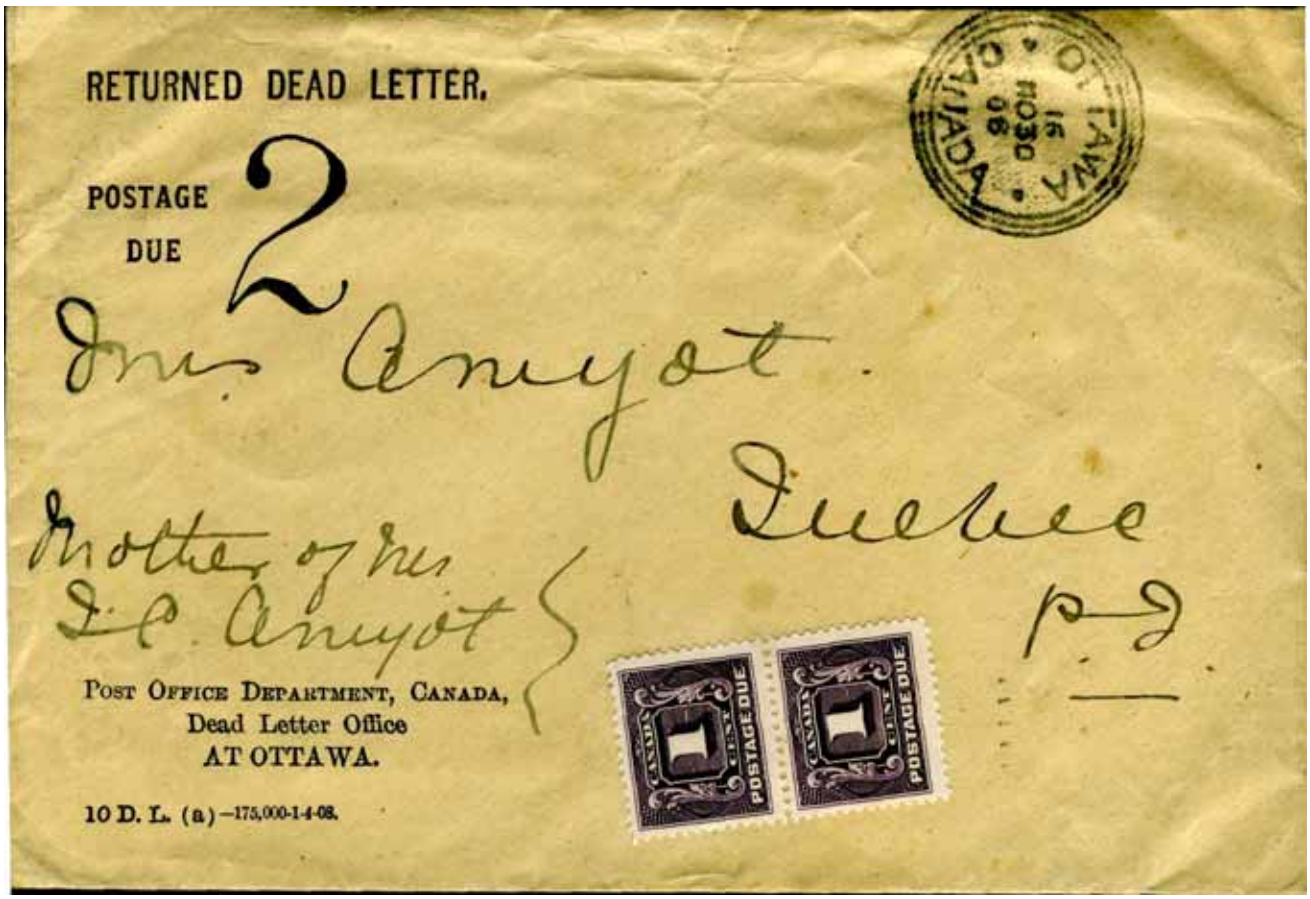
Returned to Winnipeg from Ottawa, December 1909. 10 D.L. (A)—175,000–1-4-08. Charged 2¢.

Returned from Edmonton branch DLO

A branch D L O was established at Edmonton 12 August 1910, but only a handful of returned dead letter covering wrappers are known from this office.

Returned to Quebec, November 1914. Print data: 10 D.L. (A.)—50,000–6-12-1911. Charged 2¢; payment indicated by postage due stamps. With faint Quebec General Delivery (*poste restante*) boxed datestamp.

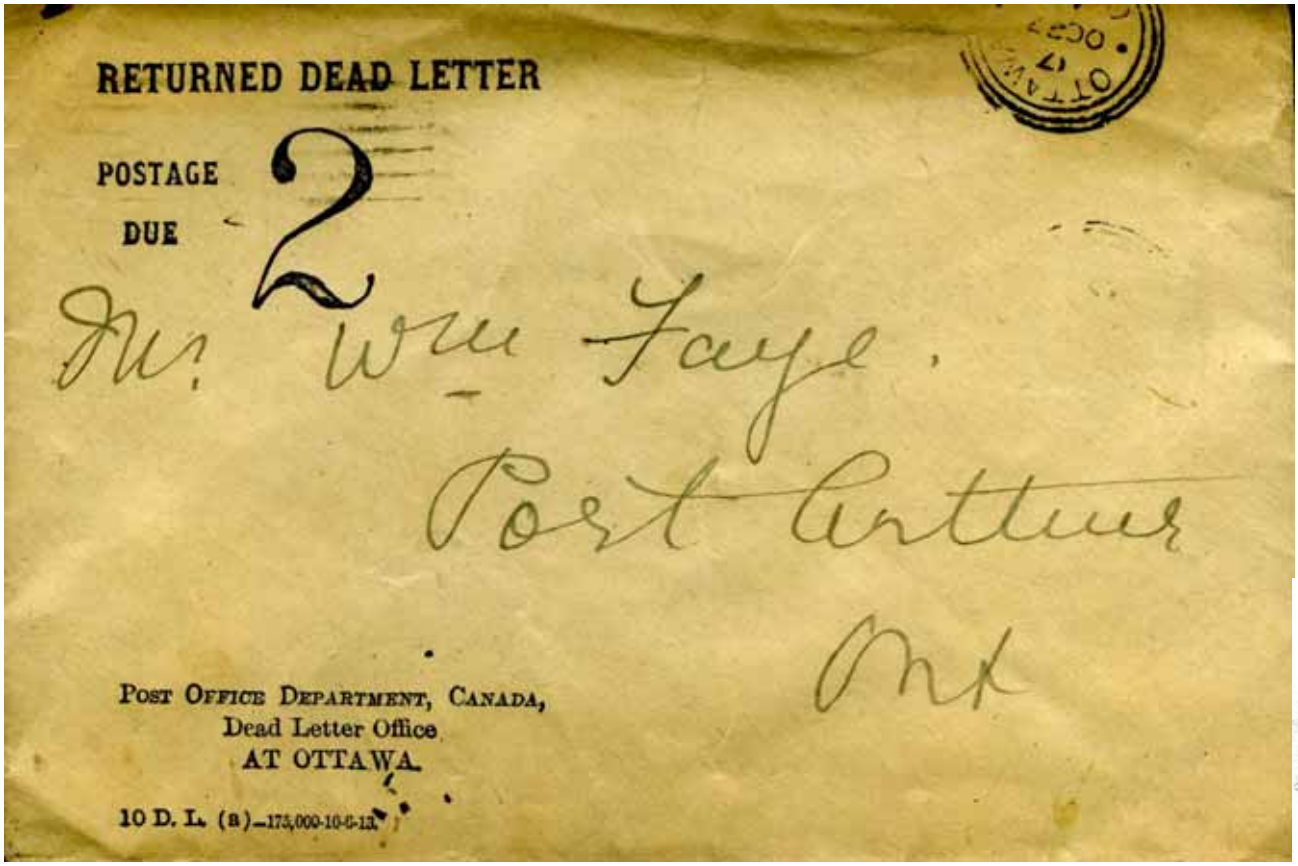
With enclosure, from the US (1908)

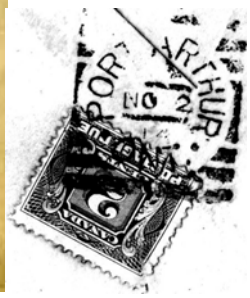


Returned to Quebec, from Ottawa, November 1908. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—175,000–1-4-08. Addressed to *Mother of Mrs JC Amyot.* Enclosed cover below.

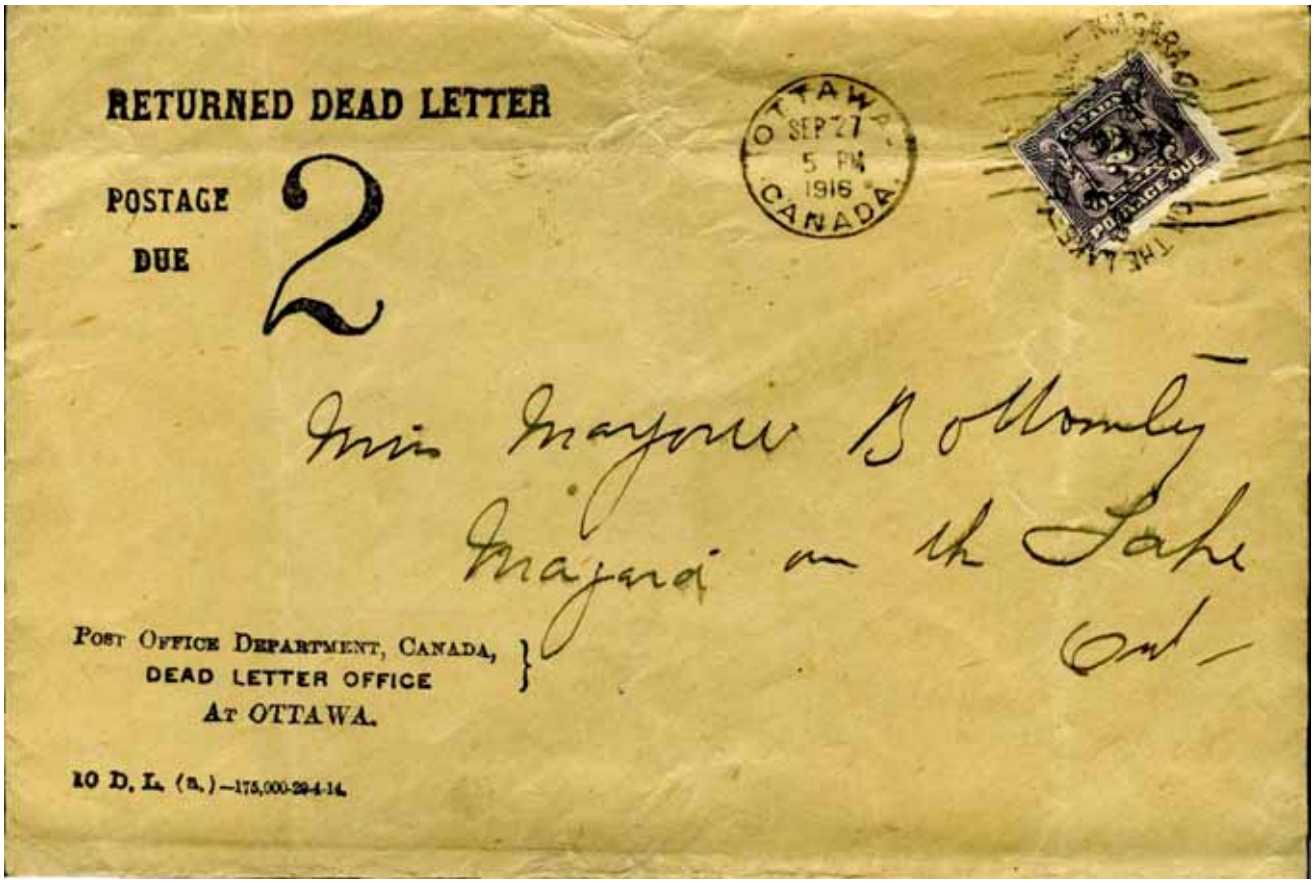
Enclosed cover, Quebec to Vancouver, forwarded to San Francisco, September 1908. Originally to General Delivery (*poste restante*), forwarded to SF, ADVERTISED there (and charged 1¢, withdrawn when non-delivery was clear), and returned with **Non-reclamé** handstamp.

Postage due stamps (1909 & 1916)





Returned to Port Arthur (*ON*) *from Ottawa,* October-November 1909. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—175,000–10-6-13. 2¢ fee paid with postage due stamp on reverse (also sealing the envelope).



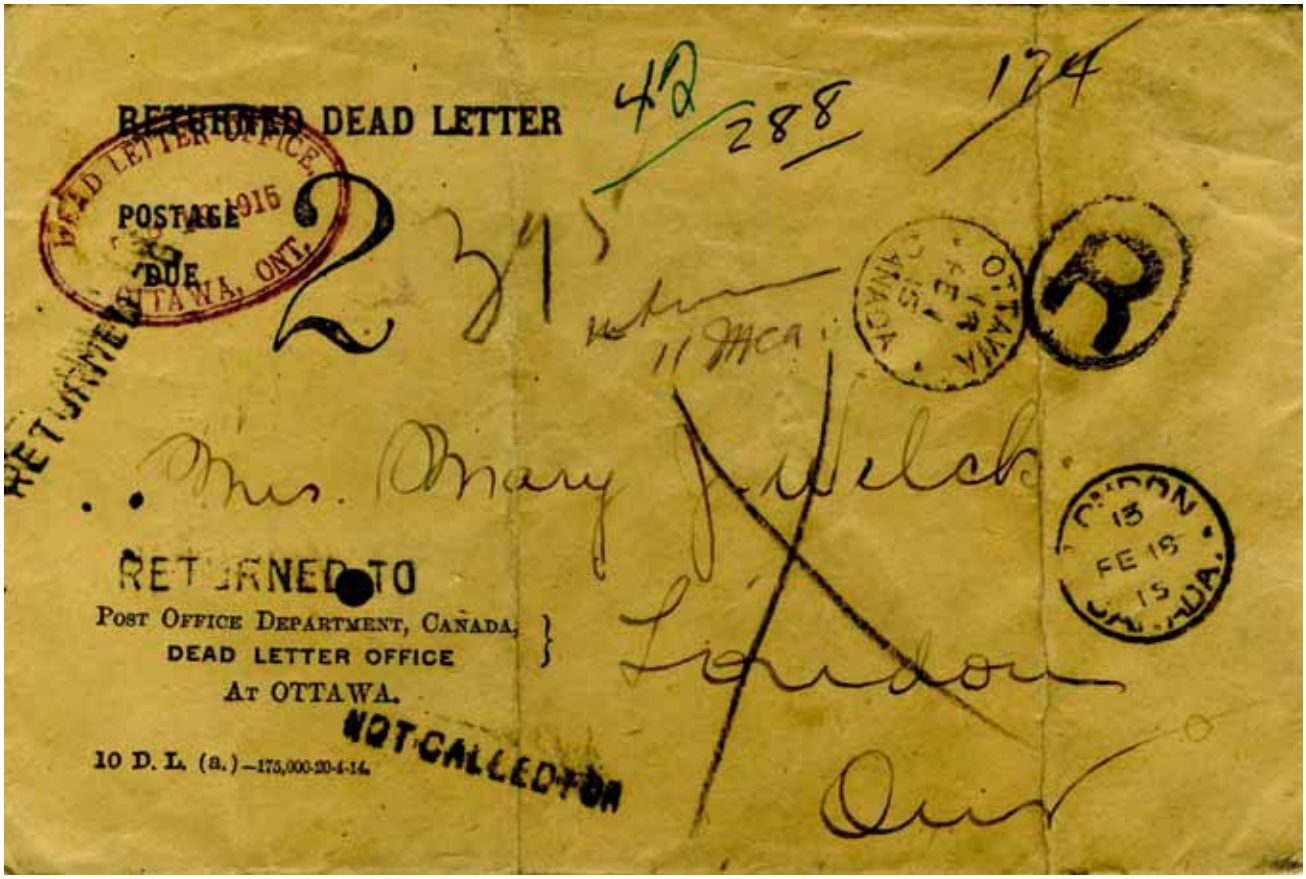
Returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake (*ON*) *from Ottawa,* September 1916. 10 D.L. (A)—175,000–29-4-14.

Large registered covering envelope (1914)

Returned to Valleyfield (QC) *from Montreal,* March 1914. Print data: 9 D. L. (A)—10,000-19-5-11. Unusual purple handstamp **2**, the return service fee. Red wax seal of Montreal branch D L O. Dotted Montreal circle datestamp.

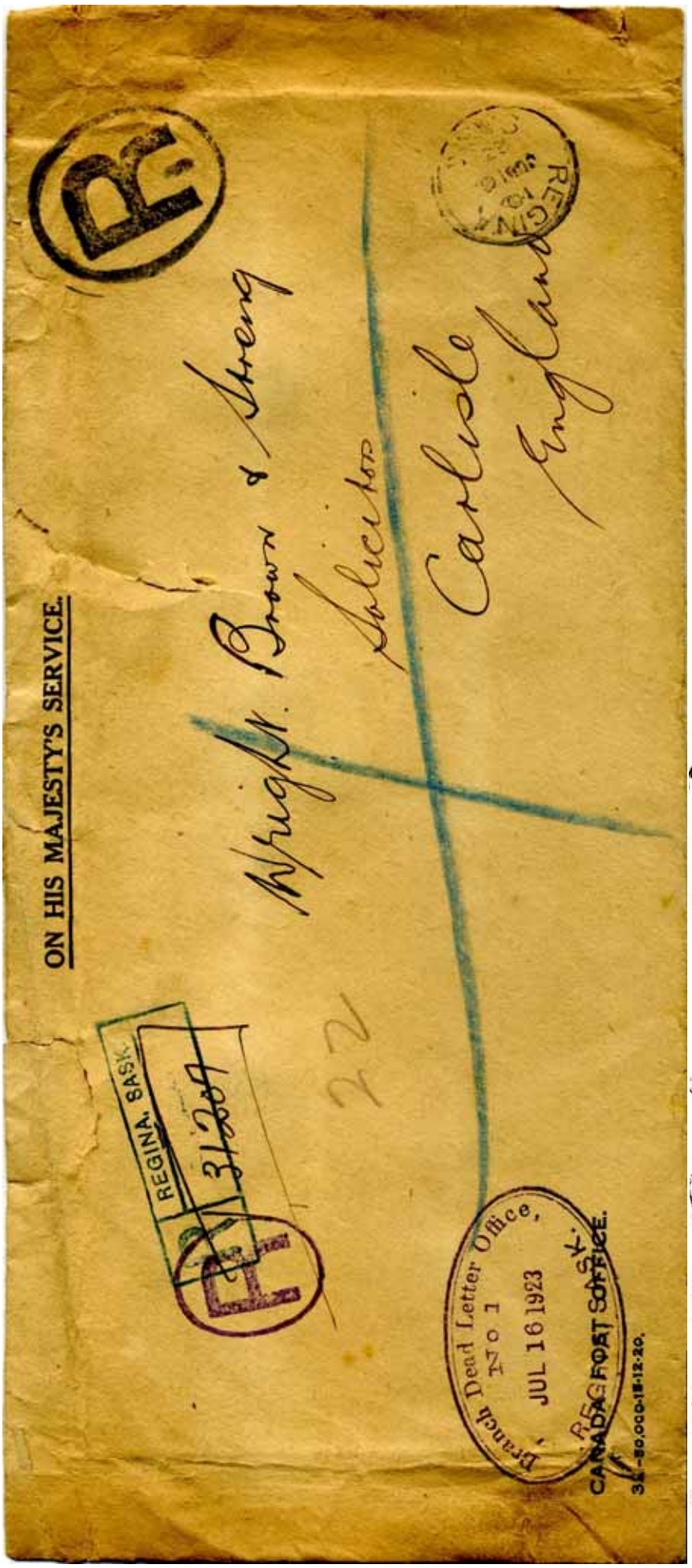
The registered letter that wouldn't return

If a letter could not be returned to sender, any contents of value would be removed and eventually sold, while the rest would be destroyed after a reasonable time. This covering envelope could not be returned to sender, so was sent back to the D L O.



Attempted return to London (*ON*) *from Ottawa branch* D L O, 1 February 1915. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—175,000–20-4-14. Charged 2¢ (obviously not paid). At London, stamped NOT·CALLED·FOR and RETURNED TO, and sent back to the D L O on the 18th, arriving there the next day.

As usual for returned registered letters, red wax seal on reverse.



Returned registered letter from UK with enclosed letter

Large covering envelope for returning large registered letter to England; its enclosed registered letter and *its* enclosure (a cheque) is shown on the next page.

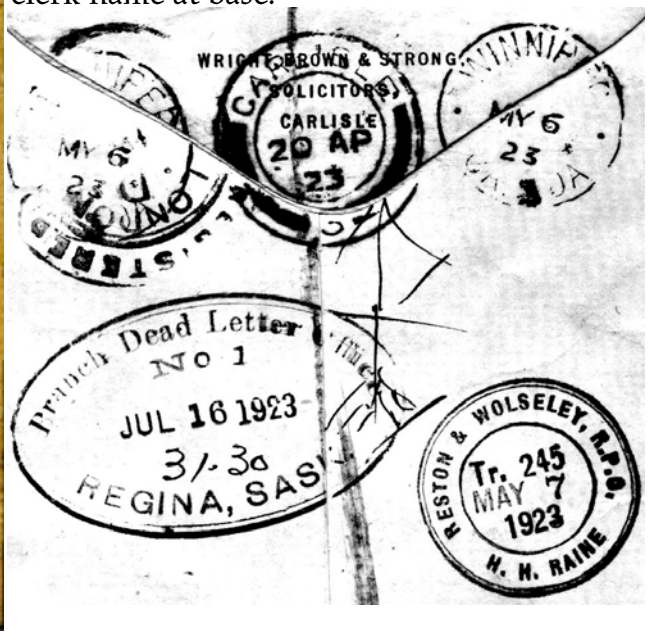
Regina branch DLO opened in 1910; covering envelopes are very difficult to find, and this one is provisional.

Regina branch DLO–Carlisle, 1923. No DLO returned letter fee (recipient was dead) sent registered as the original had been. The oval DLO datestamp is Plain #228, second reported strike.

On reverse, Liverpool & Carlisle reg'd ovals, as well as three mostly intact DLO crown seals.

Next page →

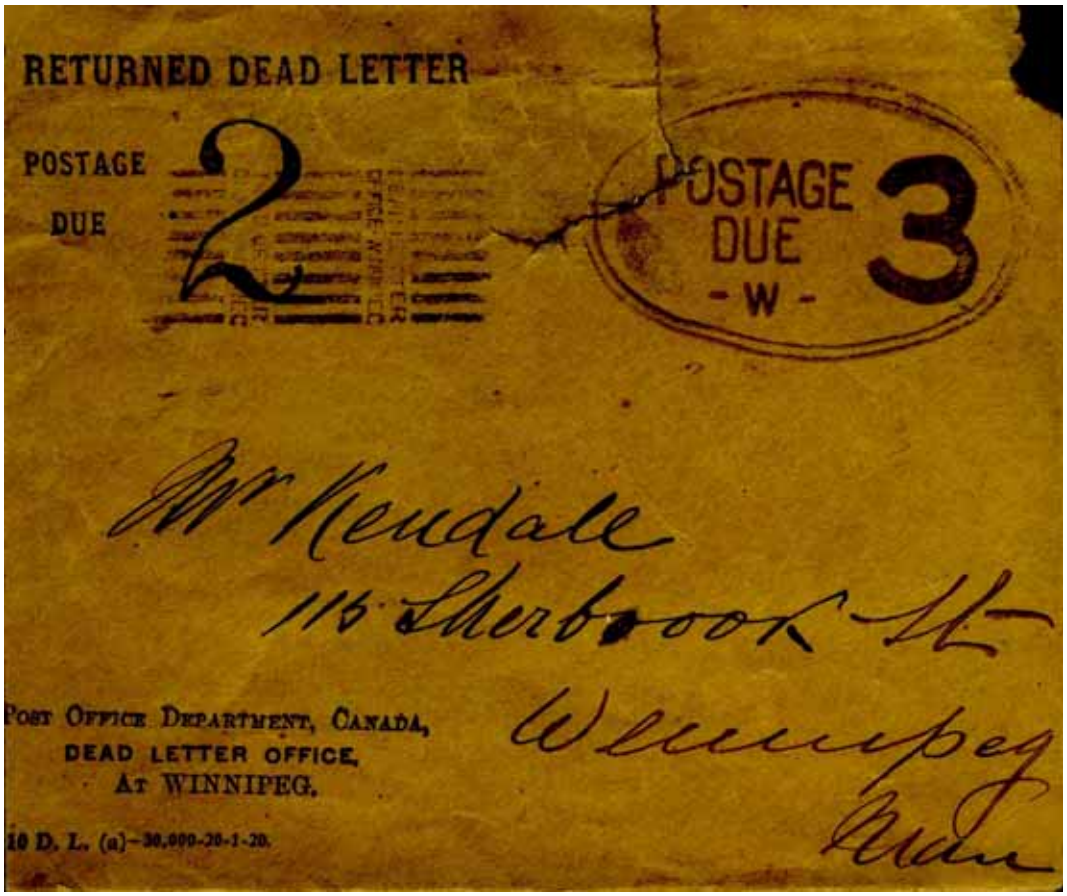
Reverse of enclosed registered letter has another strike (same date) of the oval branch DLO dater, and difficult-to-find Reston & Wolseley double circle RPO (in blue) with clerk name at base.



Enclosed **dead** *registered letter with its enclosure, Carlisle–Windthorst* (SK), 1923. **Rated** 3d registration and 1½d Empire rate. Cover is marked *Dead* (referring to recipient). Enclosed cheque was for $92.85.

Service fee increases from 2¢ to 3¢, 1 April 1922.

Bottom cover shows probable clerical error, with older covering envelope not altered as the top one was.

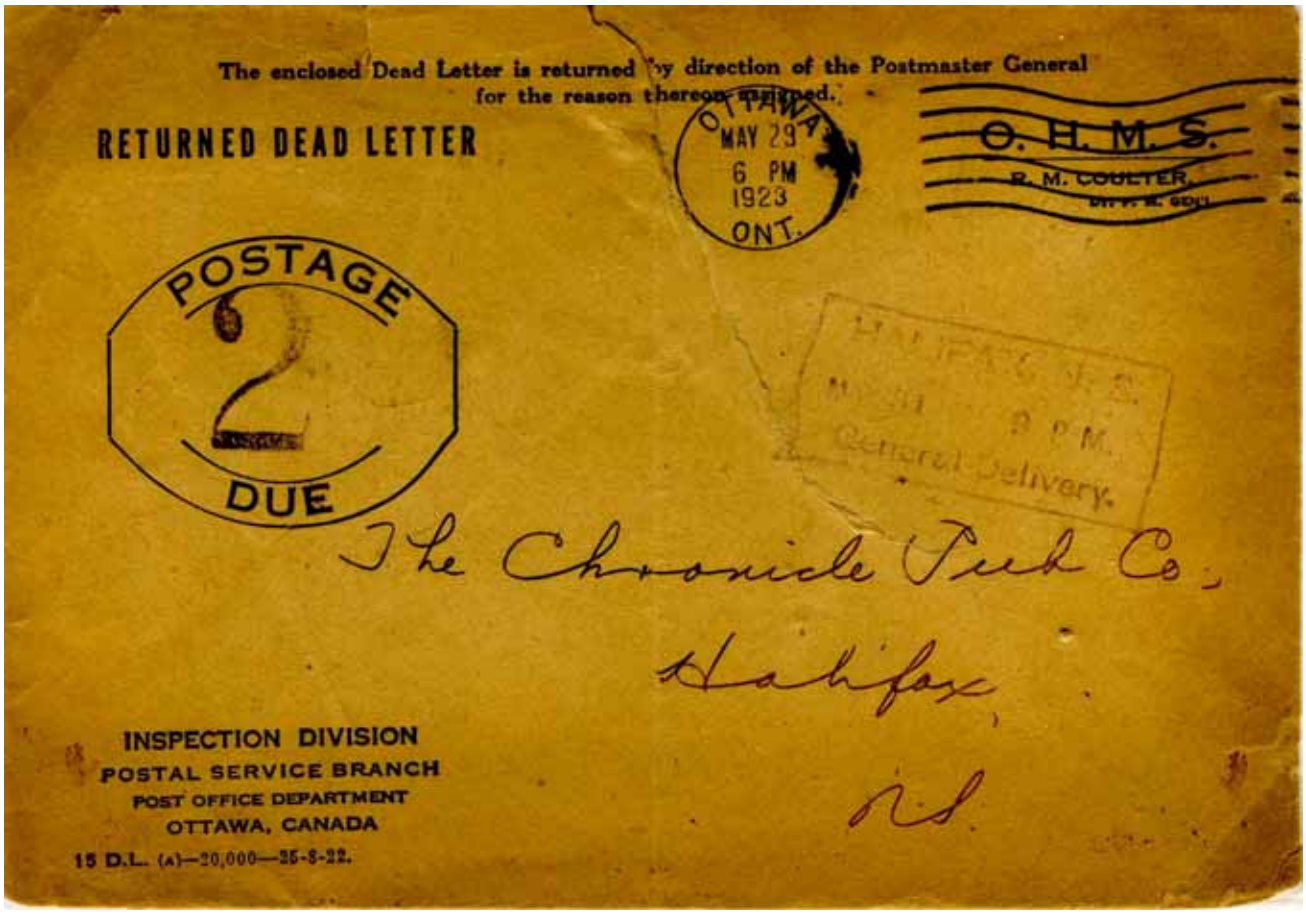


Returned to Winnipeg from Winnipeg branch D L O, undated. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—30,000–20-1-20. Former rate overwritten with DEAD LETTER / OFFICE WINNIPEG roller, and oval 3¢ ratestamp applied.

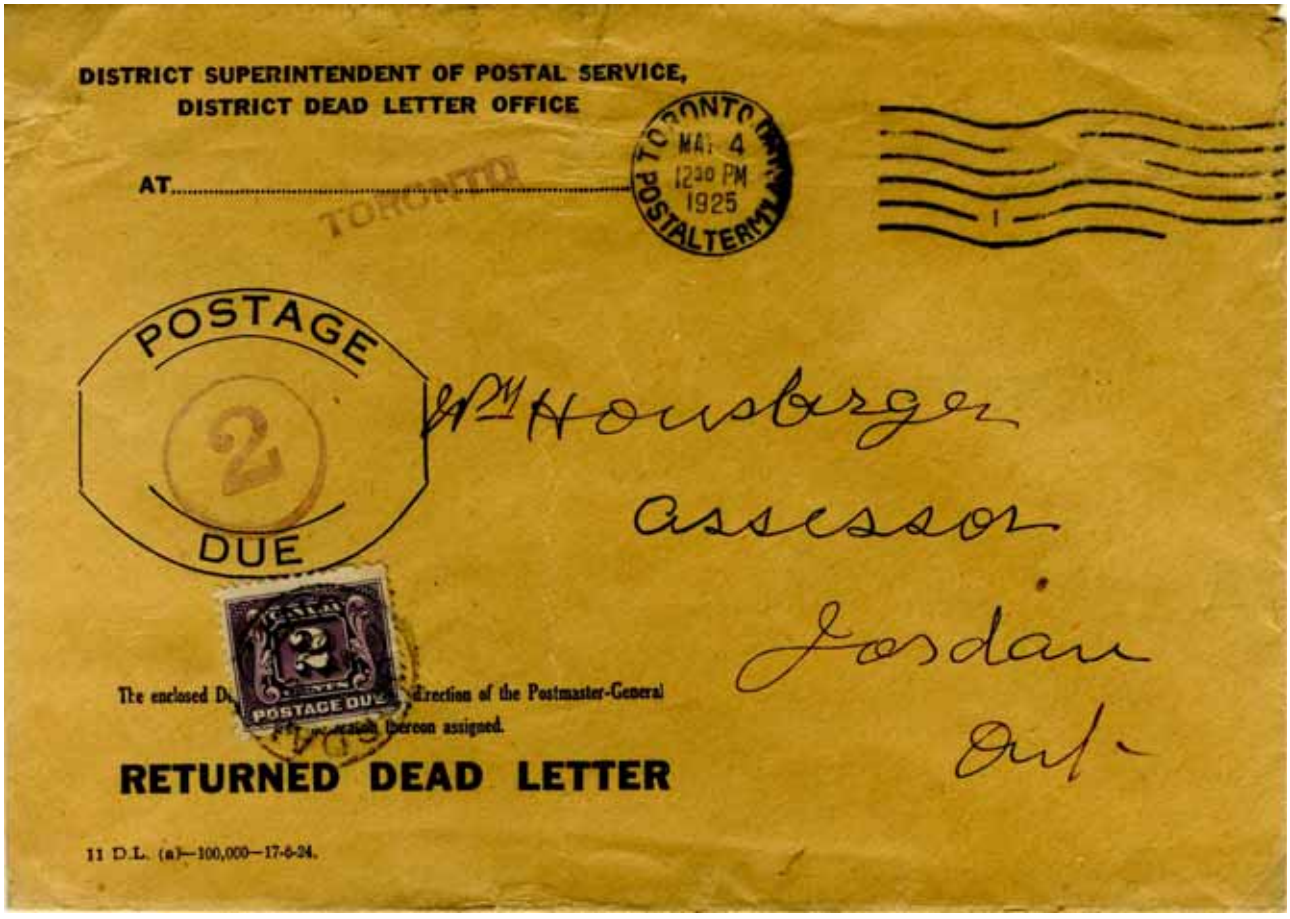
Returned to Galt from Ottawa branch D L O, 18 April 1922. Well after the rate changed to 3¢. Print data: 11 D.L. (A)—150,000–15-11-21.

More mystery undercharges (1923 & 1925)

Inexplicable 2¢ charges at a time when the fee was 3¢. One (remote) explanation is that these were unpaid drop rates (1¢, with penalty doubling), but for some reason were exempt from the return service fee.



Returned to Halifax from Ottawa, May 1923. Print data: 15 D.L. (A)—20,000—25-3-22. Purple Halifax General Delivery (*poste restante*) datestamp.

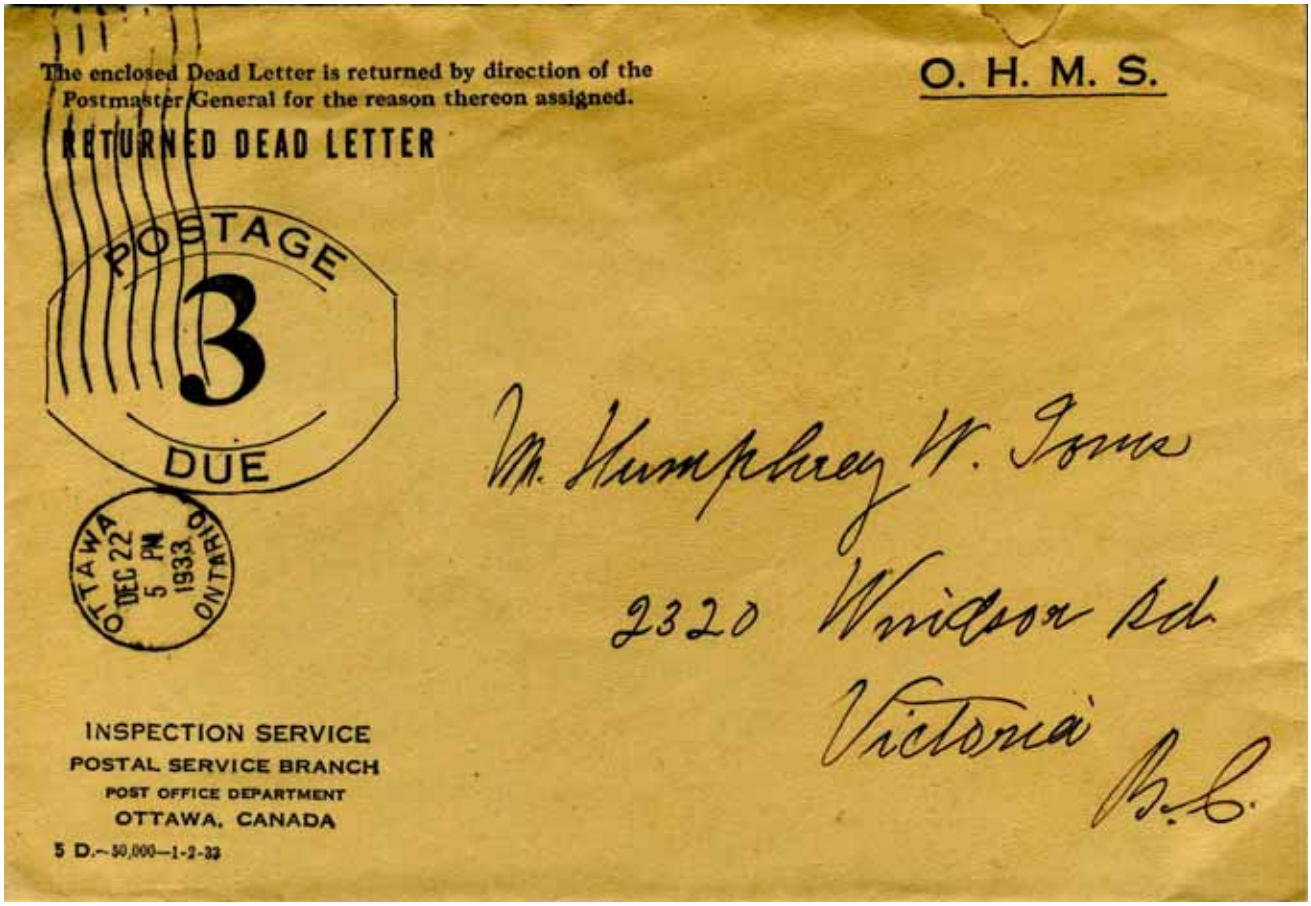


Returned to Jordan (ON) from Toronto, May 1925. **Three years** after the rate changed to 3¢. Print data: 11 D.L. (A)—150,000—17-6-24. Postage due stamp cancelled by Jordan cds.

Return of heavy matter

Returned to Winnipeg from Winnipeg, undated. Print data:
9 D.L. (A)—7500–17-3-25.
Charged 83¢; may have included several letters each with postage due (in addition to service charges).
Stamps killed with the COLLECT / Cents handstamp.

Returned from UK (1933)



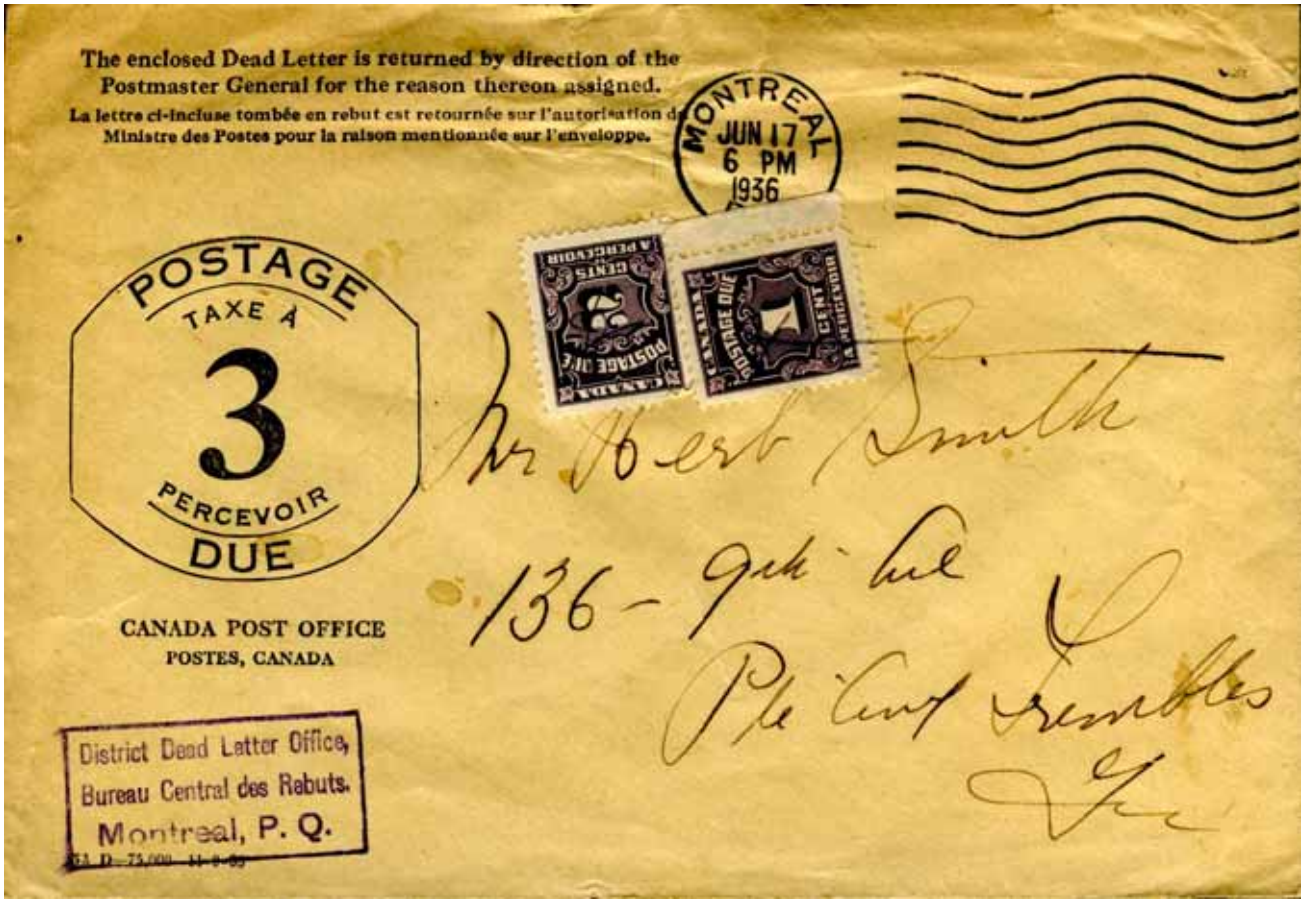
Returned to Victoria from Ottawa, December 1933. Print data: 5 D.—50,000–1-2-33. Charged 3¢ for return service. Enclosure below.

Victoria to London, November 1933. Ms and handstamp on reverse, *Gone Away*; also on reverse, Inspection Division, Ottawa D L O datestamp. Postage pays 3¢ Empire rate.

Bilingual covering envelopes (1936)

Used at Montreal, and later also at Ottawa, D L O. Form number typically has $\frac{1}{2}$ in it.

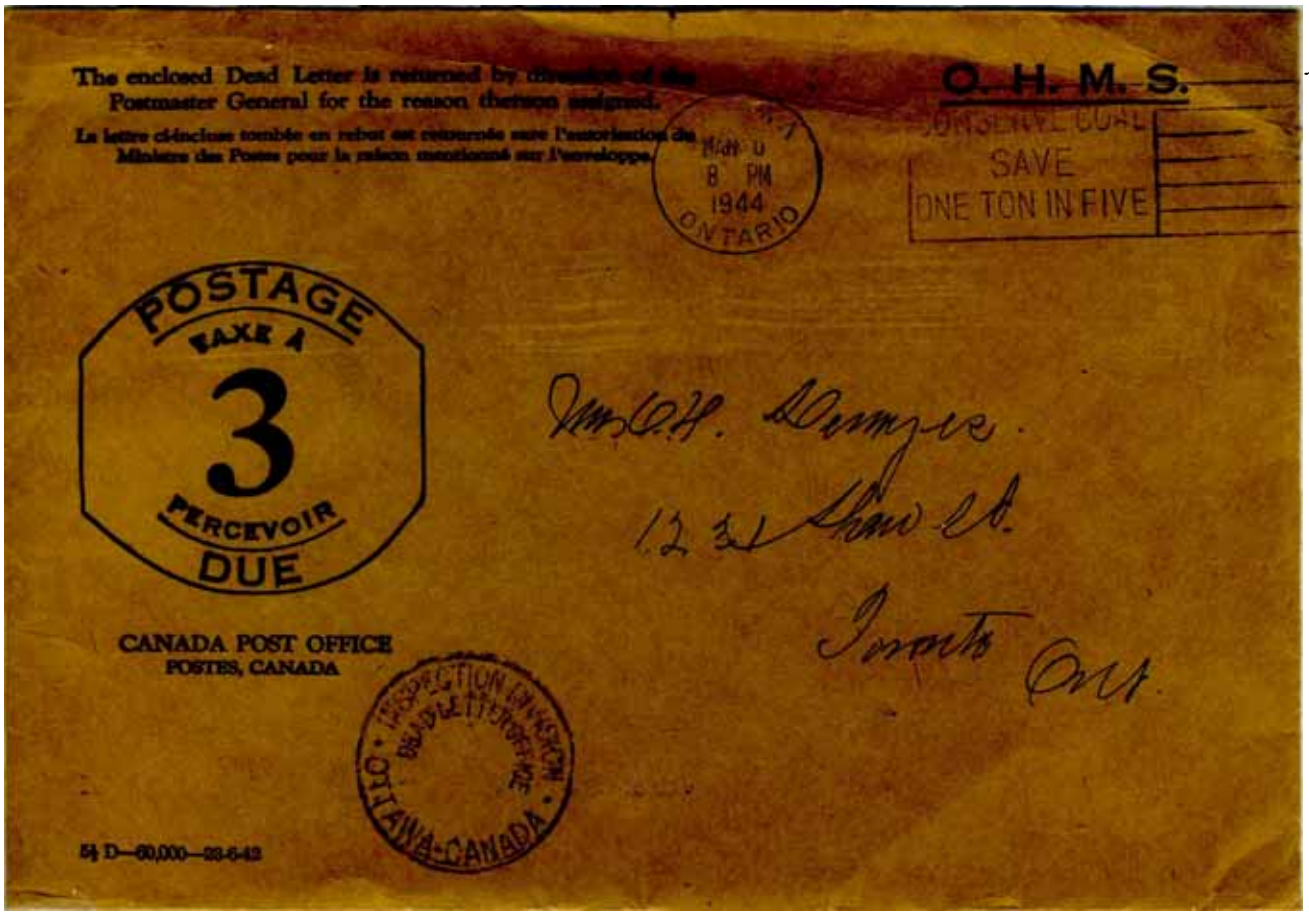
Returned to Sherbrooke from Montreal D L O, February 1936. Print data: 5½D–50,000–11-1-34. Charged 3¢ for return service; different series' postage due stamps.



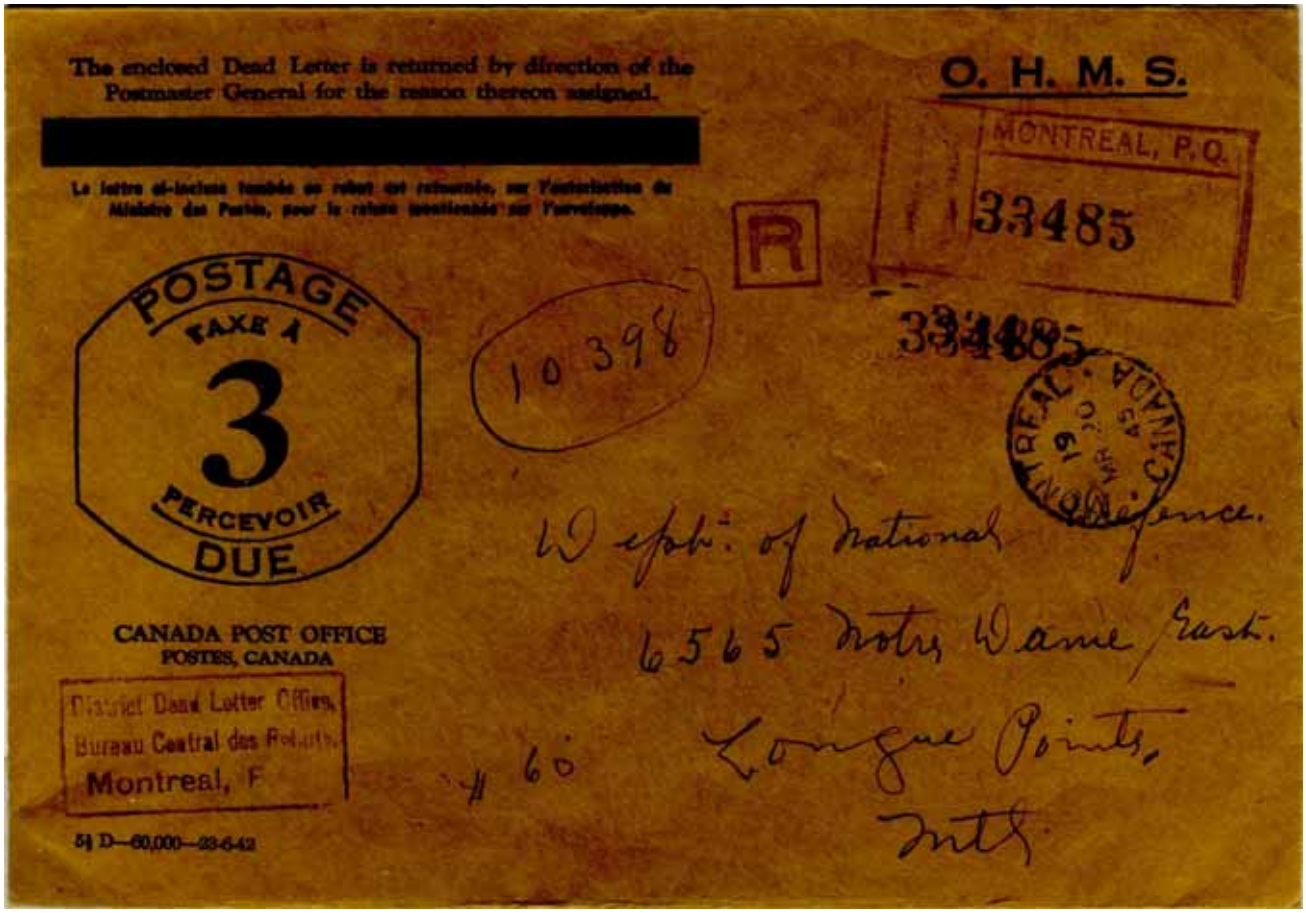
Returned to Pointe aux Trembles (Montreal), from Montreal, June 1936. Print data: 5½D– 75,000–11-9-35.

Bilingual covering envelopes (1944 & 1945)

Same print data, but the one below has corrected an error in the French text (*sure* replaced by *sur*).



Returned to Toronto from Ottawa DLO, January 1944. Print data: 5½D–60,000–23-6-42. Charged 3¢ for return service.

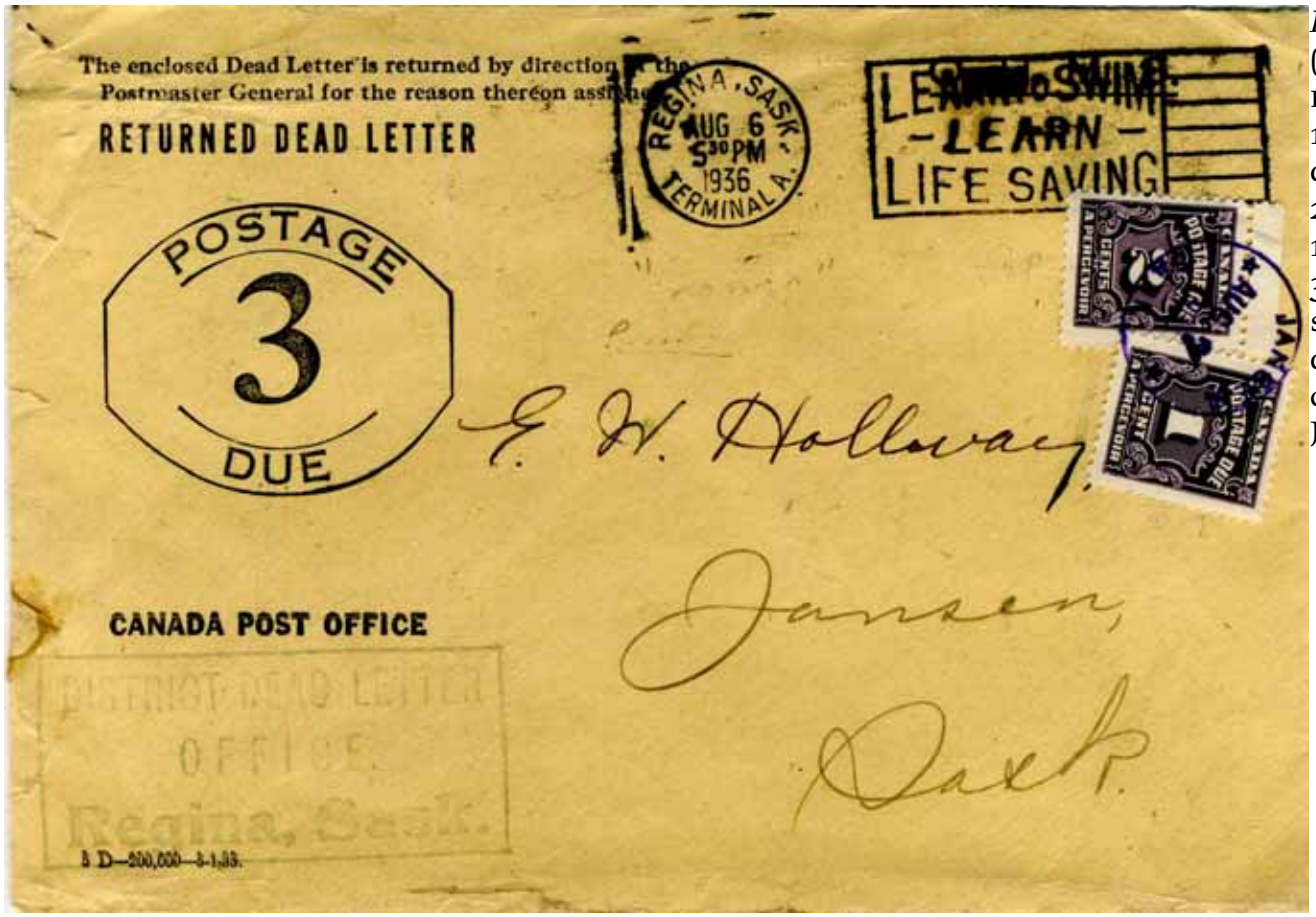


Returned registered to Longue Pointe (Montreal), from Montreal, March 1945. Print data as above.

R normally used on registered bag tags. Two small wax seals on reverse.

Regina & Calgary branch dead letter offices (1936 & 1942)

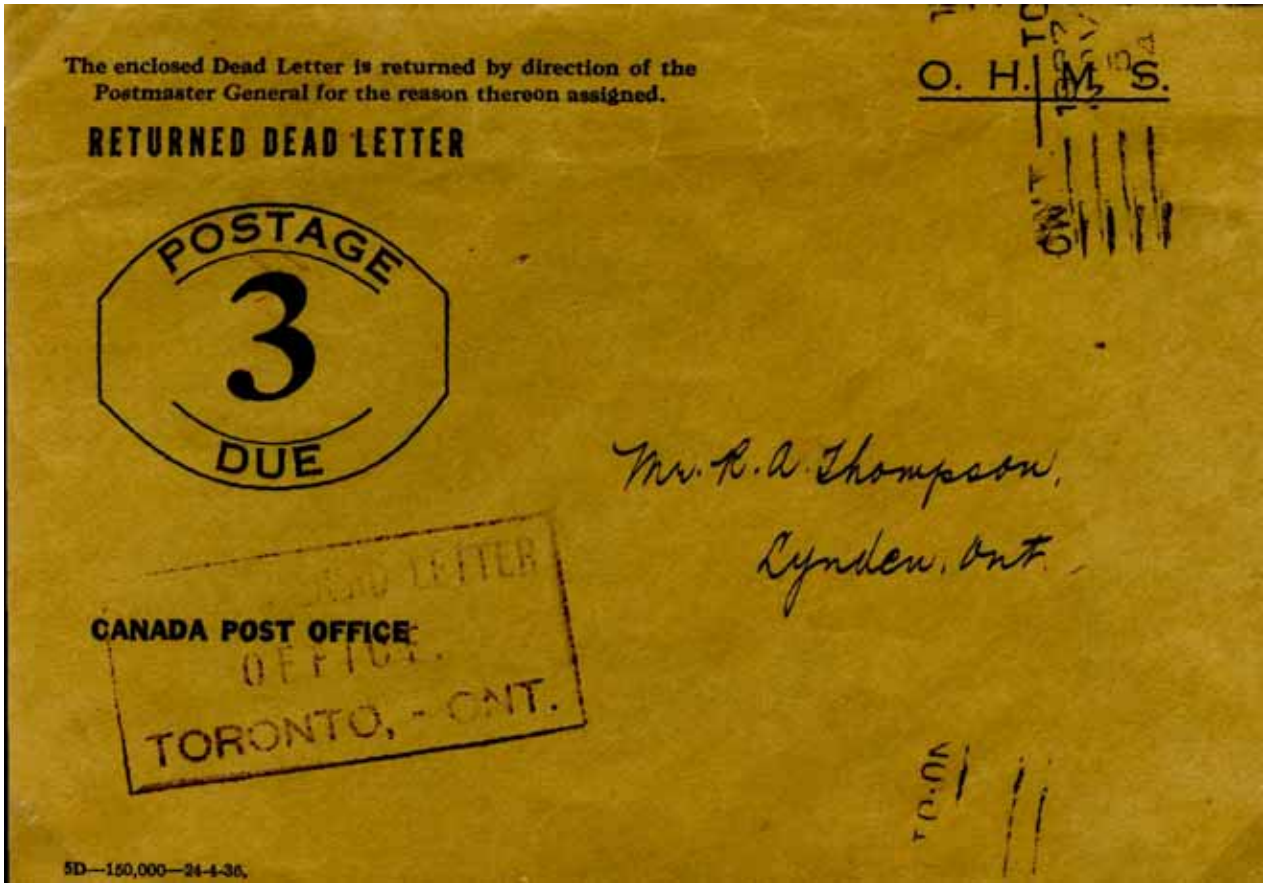
Regina's branch D L O opened in 1910, while that of Calgary opened 1931. Returned letter covering envelopes from either one are very difficult to find.



Returned to Jansen (SK) from Regina D L O, August 1936. Print data: 5D–200,000–5-1-35. Charged 3¢ for return service; postage due stamps cancelled by Jansen MOOD.

Returned to Montreal, from Calgary D L O, April 1942. Print data: 5D–200,000–12-2-40.

Returned with enclosure (1937)

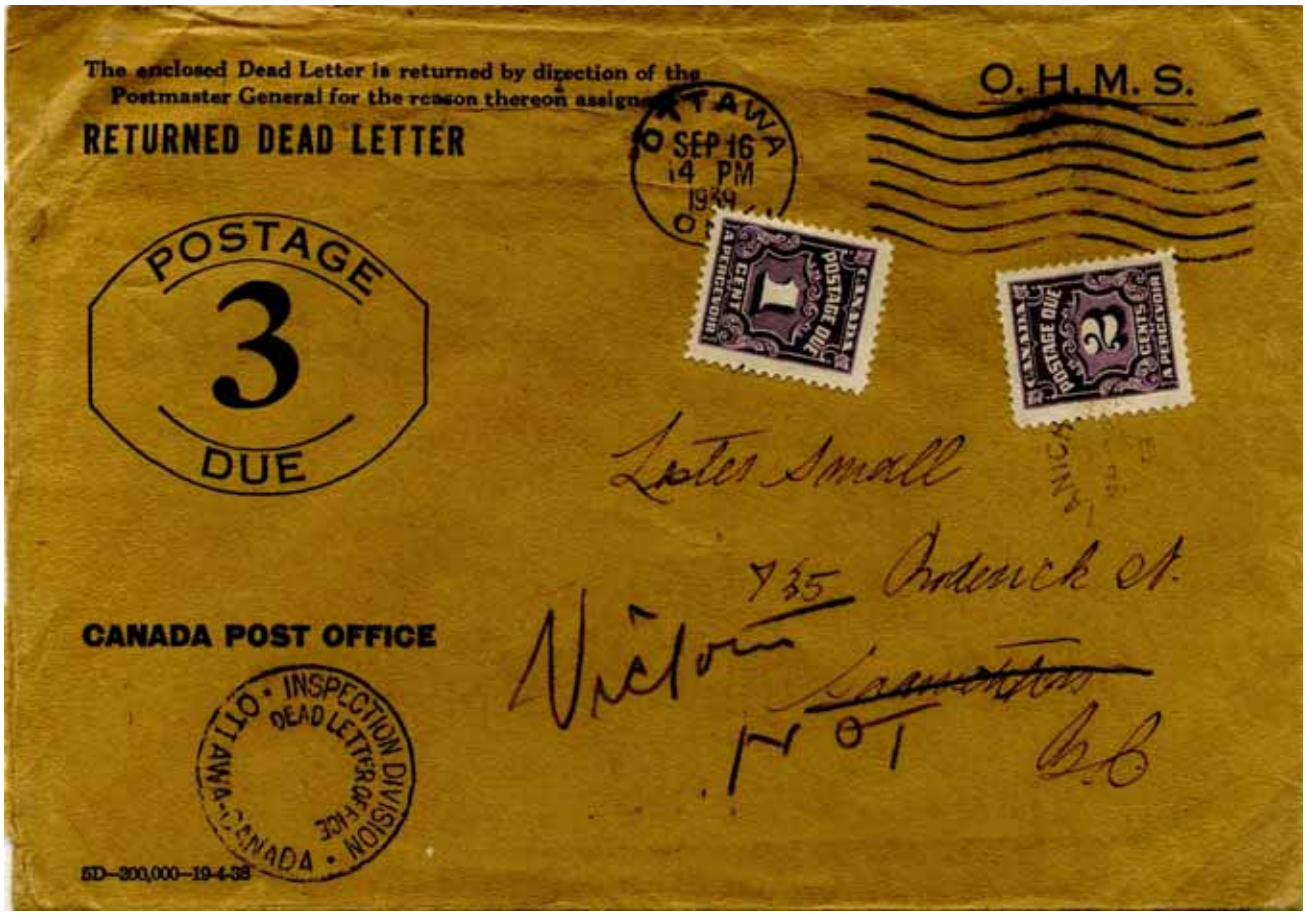


Returned to Lynden (*ON*) *from Toronto* D L O, November 1937. Print data: 5D—150,000–24-4-36. Charged 3¢ for return service. Unusual use of roller on covering envelope.

Diff't Toronto Postal Superintendent date-estamps.

Lynden to Cainsville, multiply forwarded, October–November 1937. NOT·CALLED·FOR, *Try RR 4 / Paris, ...* Postage pays 3¢ domestic rate.

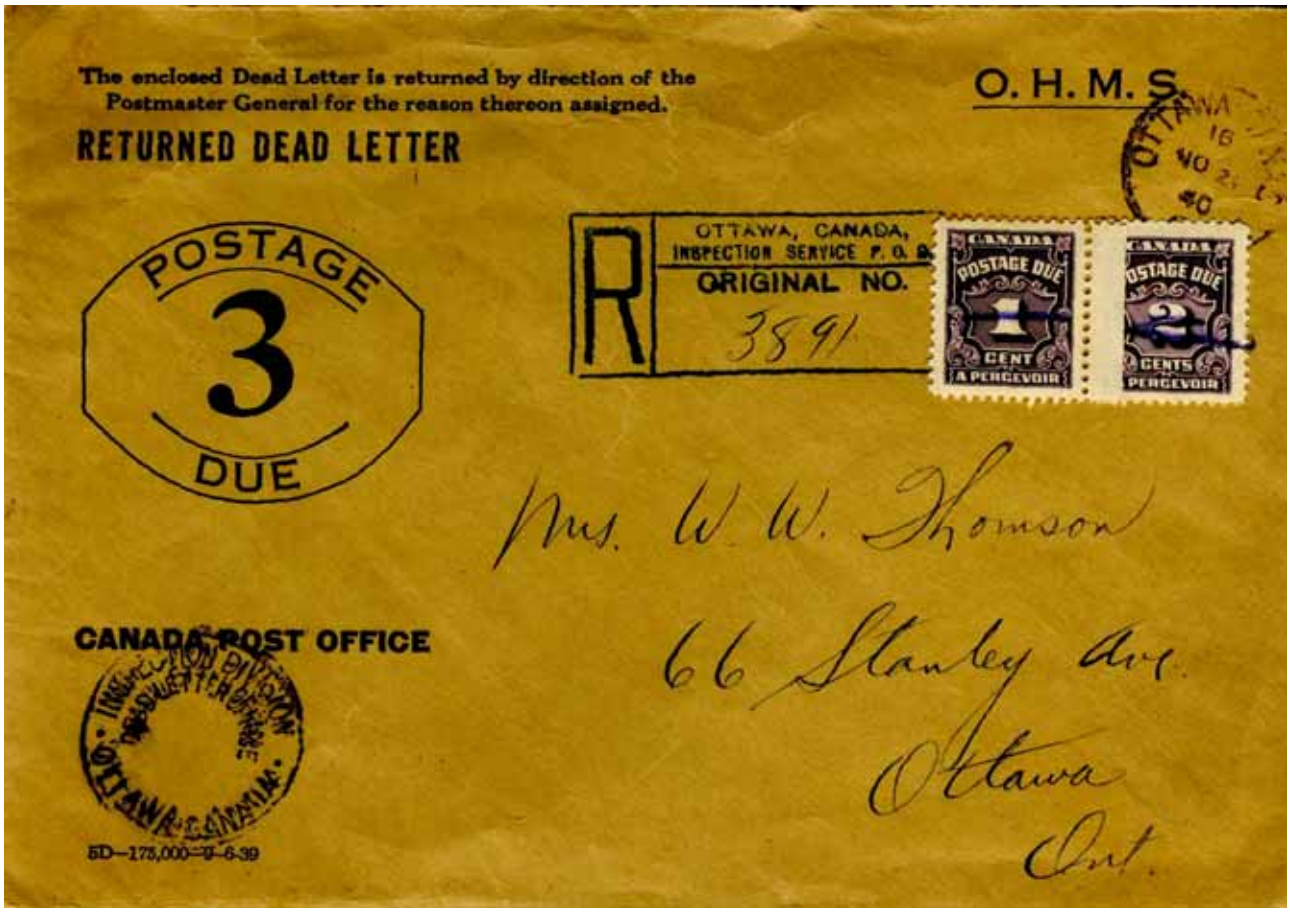
Returned from Australia with enclosure (1939)



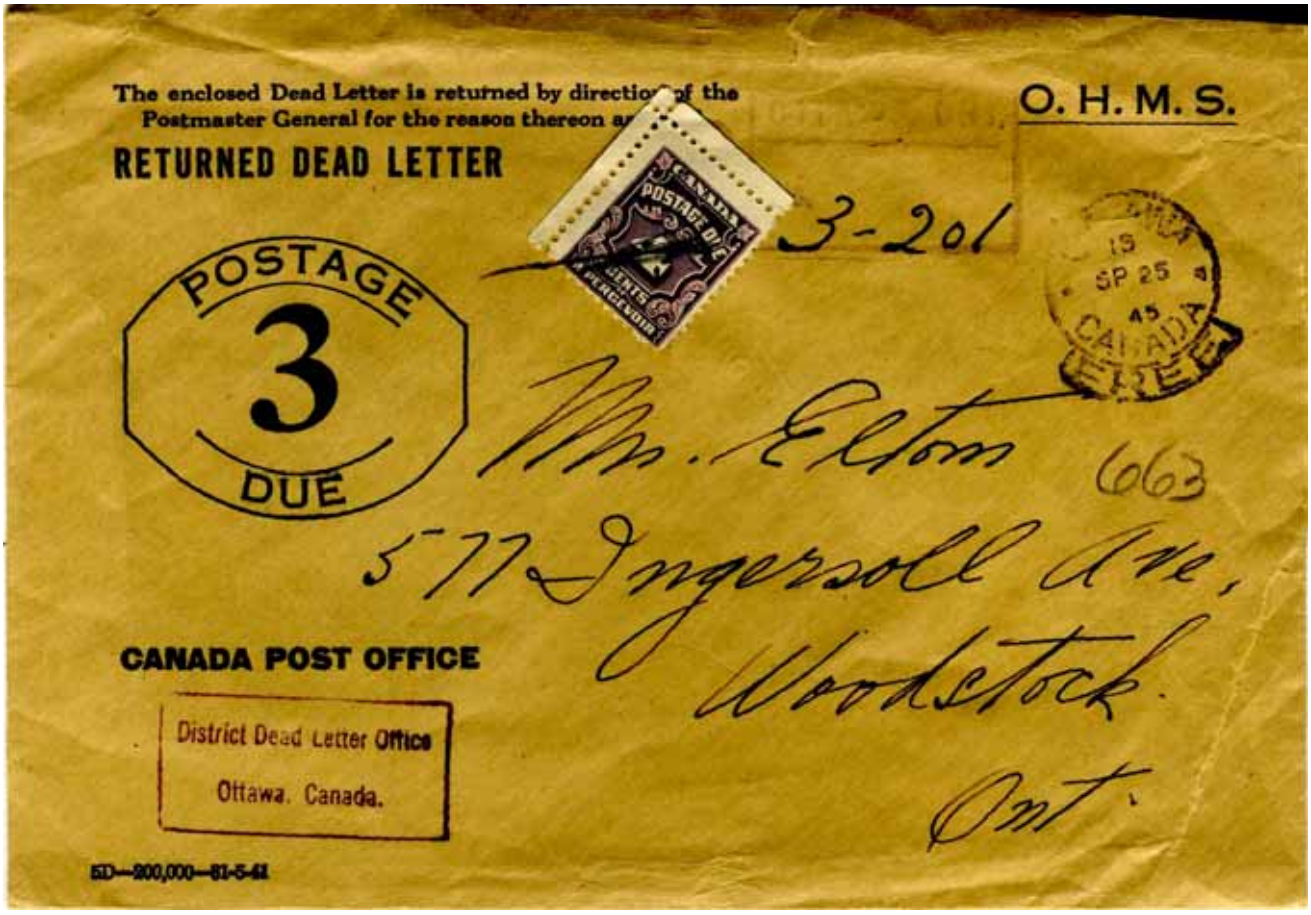
Returned to Saanich (*BC*), *forwarded to Victoria, from Ottawa* D L O, 13 September 1939. Print data: 5—200,000–19-4-38. Charged 3¢ return service.

Saanich to Sydney (*NSW*), July 1939. Four different NSW cds and Sydney D L O cancel. Postage most likely pays 6¢ Empire air rate (to Australia, initiated April 1939; *airmail* notation not permitted). The alternative is double Empire surface rate (3¢ first ounce, 2¢ each additional), overpaid by 1¢.

Registered (1940 & 1945)



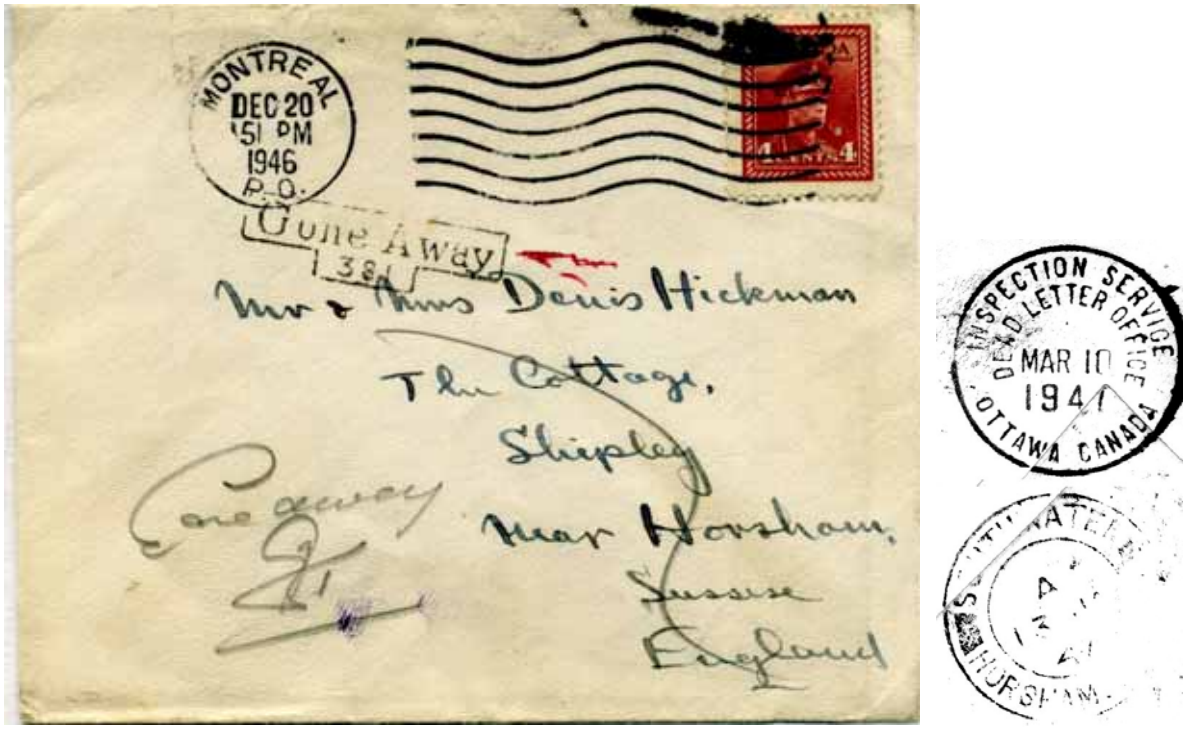
Returned registered to Ottawa from Inspection Service/Division, November 1940. Print data: 5D–175,000–9-6-39. Charged 3¢ return service. Inspection DIVISION in handstamp, but SERVICE in registration marking.



Returned registered to Woodstock (ON), from Ottawa, September 1945.
Print data 5D–200,000–31-5-41. Faint Ottawa reg'n marking.
Why 4¢ due stamp applied?
Use of Ottawa FREE datestamp is not unusual on covering envelopes, although confusing.

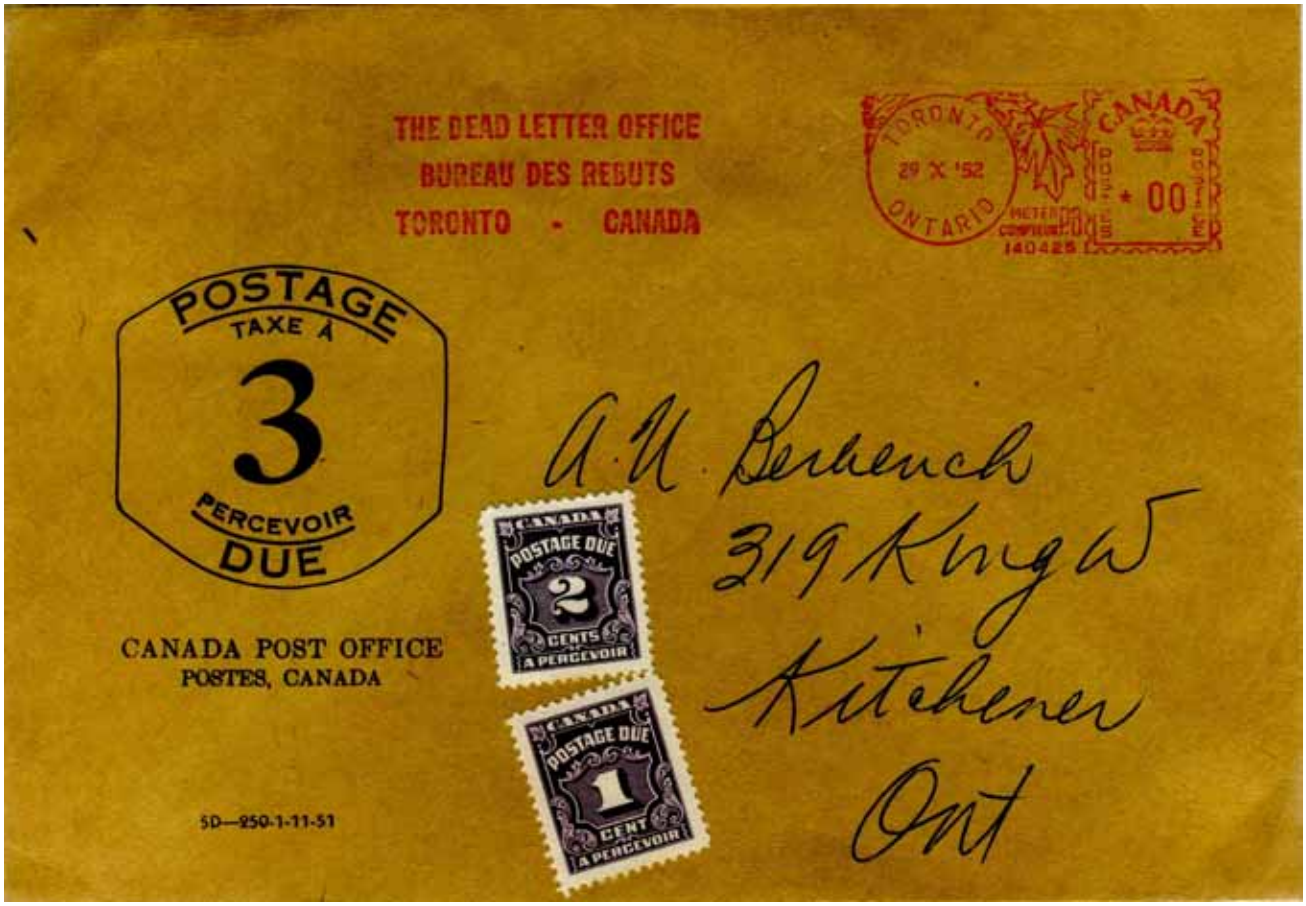
Returned from UK with enclosure (1947)

Returned to Montreal from Inspection Division, Ottawa, March 1947. Print data: 5D—200,000–20-1-45. Red machine cancel with hub at right (similar to US-style Pitney-Bowes experimental postmarks of 1948). Charged 3¢ for return service. Enclosure below.



Montreal to UK, December 1946. With ms and hs Gone Away, and on reverse, red Inspection Service dates-tamp. Postage pays 4¢ Empire rate.

Returned with enclosure (1952)



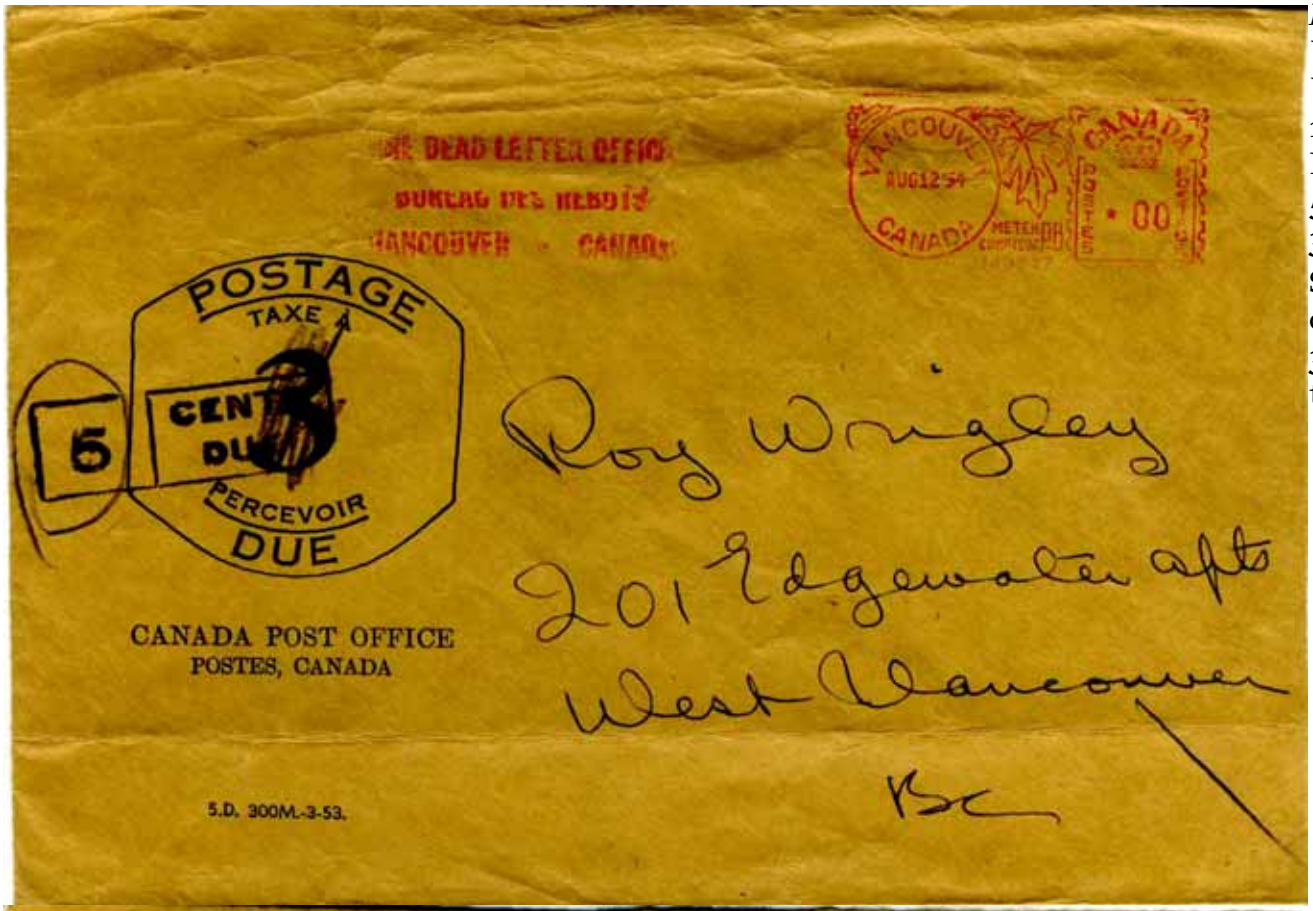
Returned to Kitchener from Toronto D L O, October 1952. Print data: 5D—250–1-11-51. Return 3¢ service fee.

Kitchener drop letter, October 1952. Forwarded twice within Kitchener. Processed by D L O just seven days after mailing!

Name and rate change (1954)

Officially, the D L O had changed to the Undeliverable Mail Office (UMO) by 1 January 1954. However, some offices (Vancouver in particular) continued to use D L O in their meter for a while.

On 1 April 1954, the return service fee increased from 3¢ to 5¢.



Returned to West Vancouver from Vancouver D L O, 18 August 1954. Print data: 5.D.–300M.-3-53. Surcharged 5¢ over printed 3¢, reflecting the rate change.

Returned to Toronto, from Toronto UMO, 4 October 1954. Print data and rate as above.

Oddities

Returned letter covering envelopes dealing with compulsory registration, returned wreck covers, returned for war tax, returned mail from dead soldiers, postal censorship, and Newfoundland.

Compulsory registration (1918)

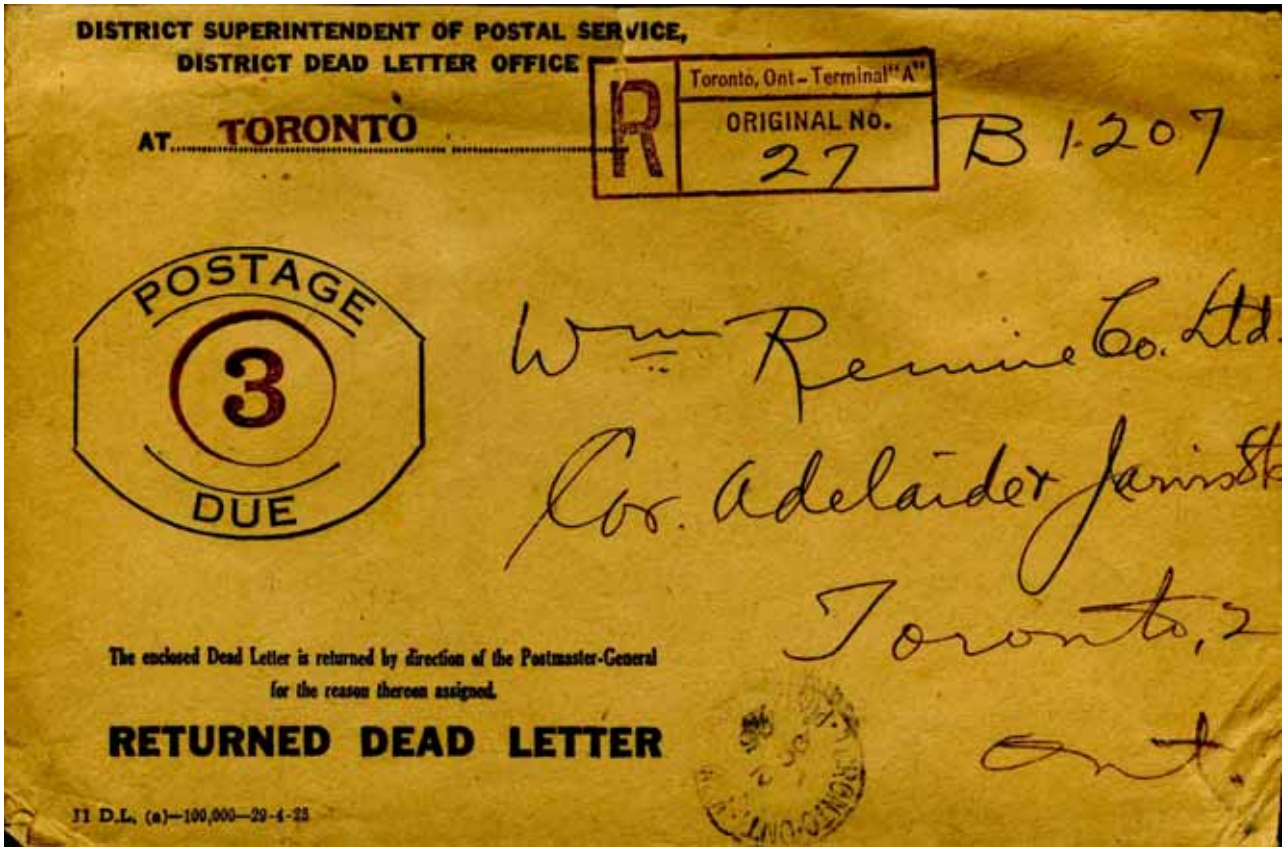
When a registered letter was returned, there was no additional fee for returning it by registered mail; however, if a letter to be returned was not sent with registration but contained something of value, it would be returned with compulsory registration, the registration fee added to the amount.

Returned to Sudbury (*ON*) *from Ottawa,* August 1918. Print data: 11 D.L. (A)—4,000–4-2-15. Postage due stamps paying 8¢ total. A plausible explanation is 2¢ return service fee, 5¢ registration fee, and 1¢ single deficiency (applied to the original letter) resulting from forwarding a drop letter outside the town, but within Canada, US, or UK.

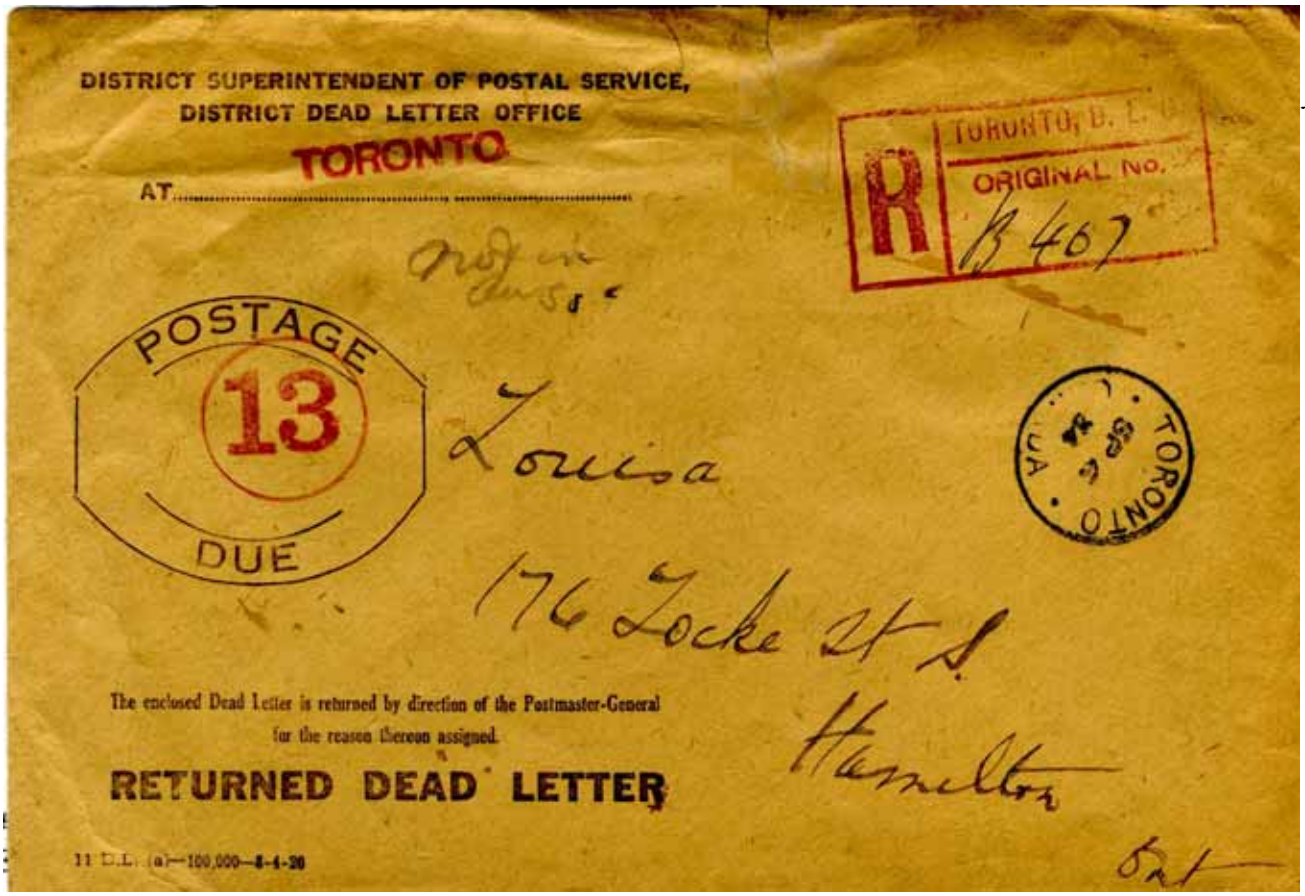
Oddly for a registered letter, there are no backstamps.

Registration & compulsory registration (1926 & 1934)

Each has two Toronto branch D L O red wax seals.



Returned registered to Toronto from Toronto branch, October 1926. Print data: 11 D.L. (A)—100,000–29-4-25. 3¢ service charge.



Returned to Hamilton from Toronto, September 1934. Print data: 11 D.L. (A)—100,000–8-4-26. (Eight year interval between printing and use.) Charged 10¢ (compulsory) registration and 3¢ service fee.

Returned to Calgary (*ON*)*, registered at Ottawa* D L O, January 1938. Print data: 5. D—100,000–6-1-37. Postage due stamps paying 10¢ for (compulsory) registration and 3¢ service charge. The registered rectangle is of the D L O Inspection Office. Enclosure below.

Returned from UK, sealed in UK, December 1937. Calgary to Weybridge, undeliverable, British official seal applied, cover *not* registered in UK. Postage pays Empire rate.

Recovered from wrecks

Undeliverable mail without a visible return address recovered from wrecks would be sent to a dead letter office, and returned in a covering envelope, which however, typically did not have the *Returned dead letter* inscription. No fee was charged for this service. Examples from the *Empress of Ireland* (May 1914) and the *Greenhill Park* (March 1945) are shown here.

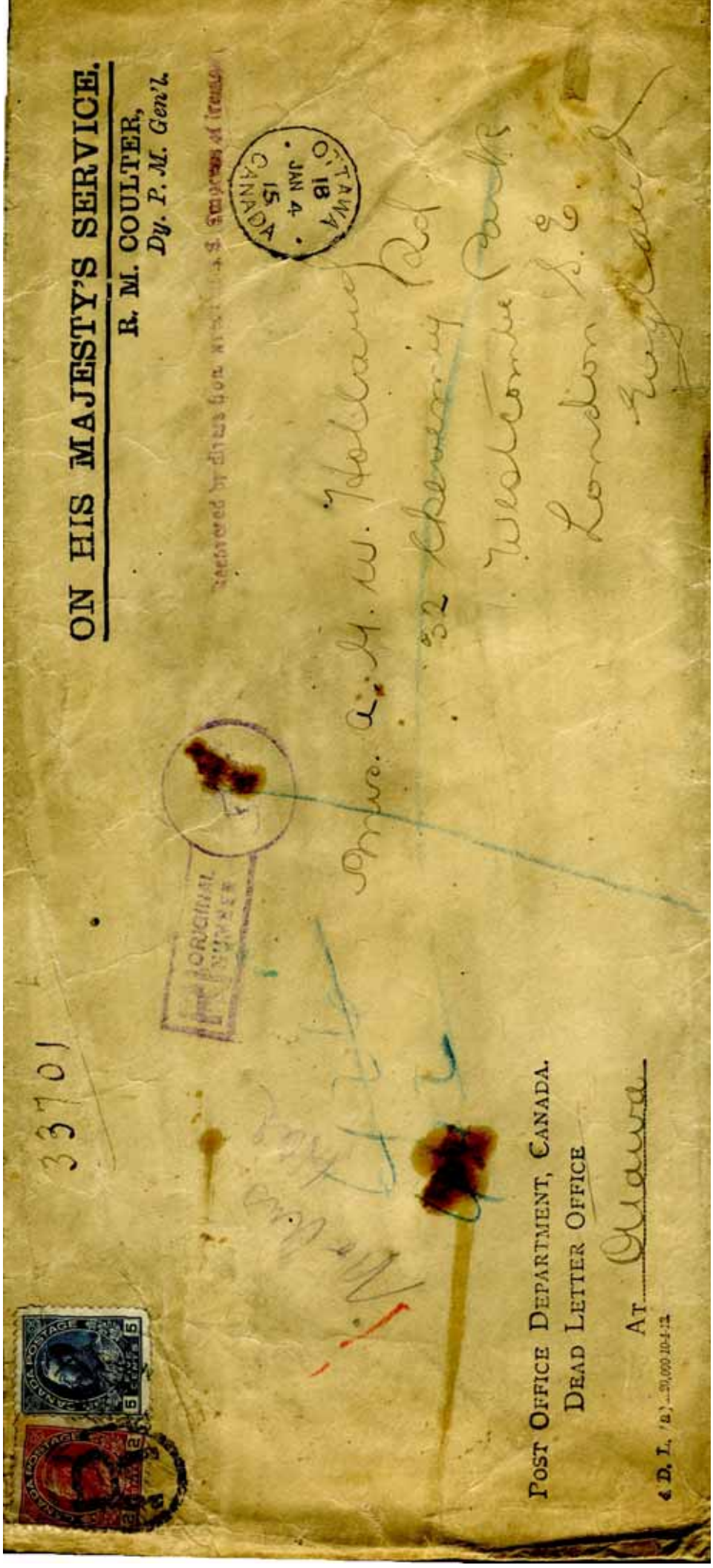
Empress of Ireland wreck covers

The CPR/RMS ship *Empress of Ireland* was rammed in the St Lawrence River near Point-au-Père (Father Point as it was then known) by the Norwegian collier *Størstad* on 29 May 1914; the latter then withdrew, and as a result of the gaping hole, the *Empress* sank very quickly. Out of 1,477 passengers and crew, 1,012 died, 840 of whom were passengers (exceeding the latters' death toll for the *Titanic,* two years earlier).

Salvage operations began almost immediately, recovering 318 bags of mail, resulting in many letters returned to sender, each handstamped Recovered by divers from the wreck of the SS Empress of Ireland, invariably almost illegible. Drying and organizing the letters took many months (the three here were returned in December and the following January).

Returned to UK from Ottawa, 28 December 1914. Print data: 5 D.L. (A)—20,000–15-9-14. 2¢ stamp added to pay the Empire rate to UK. (Evidently, the Canadian post office did not regard this as eligible for free franking, as it was to a country other than the US, and not on post office business.)

In purplish blue.



Large registered
Empress covering envelope

Returned to London from Ottawa, 4 January 1915. Print data: 4 D. L. (A)—20,000-10-4-13. With ms *Ottawa* on dot leader.

Stamps pay registration (5¢) and Empire rate (2¢); original letter must have been sent registered. (Registered wreck covers are very difficult to find.)

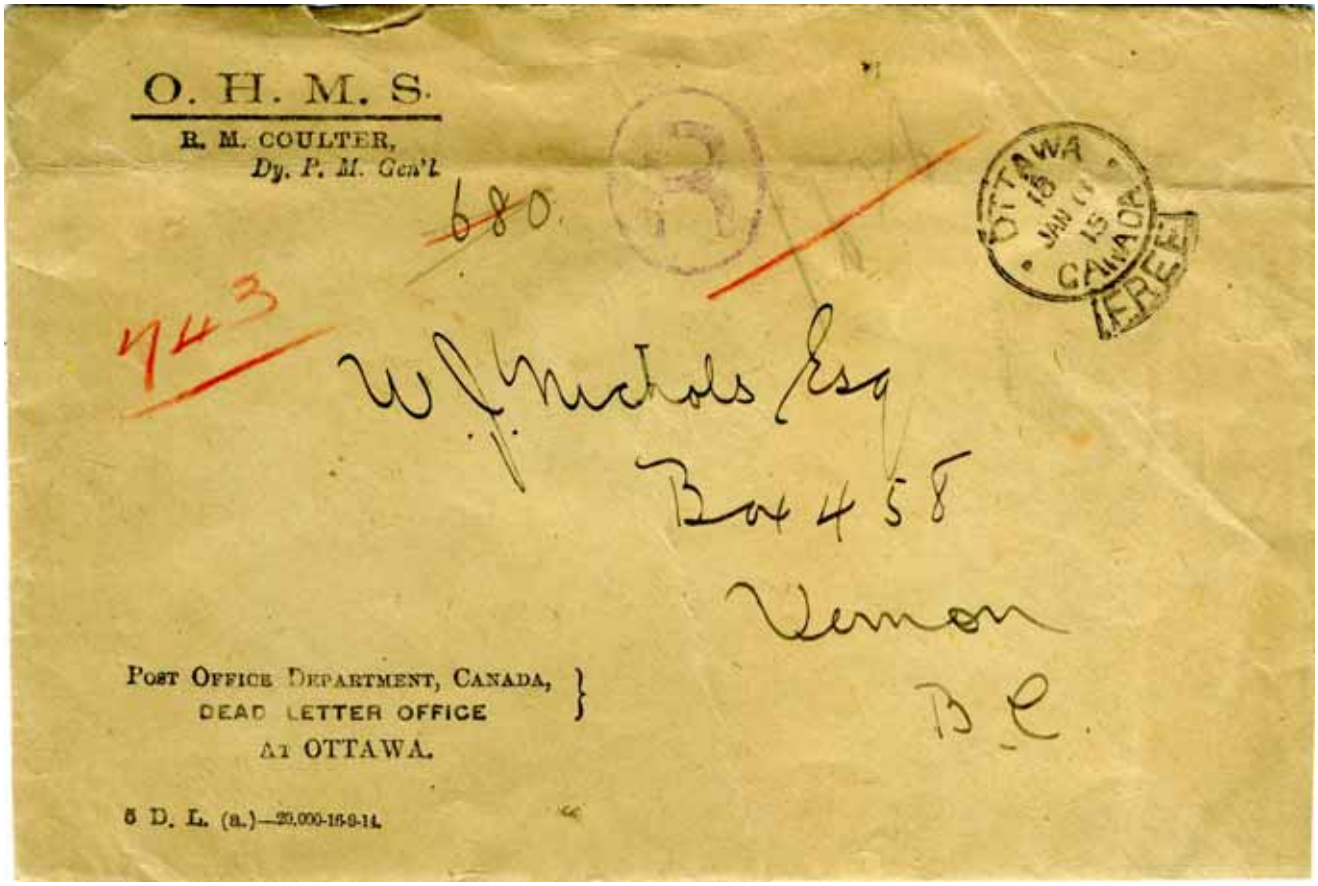
Violet **Recovered by** . . . hand-stamp.

London hooded datestamp shows arrival on 15 January.

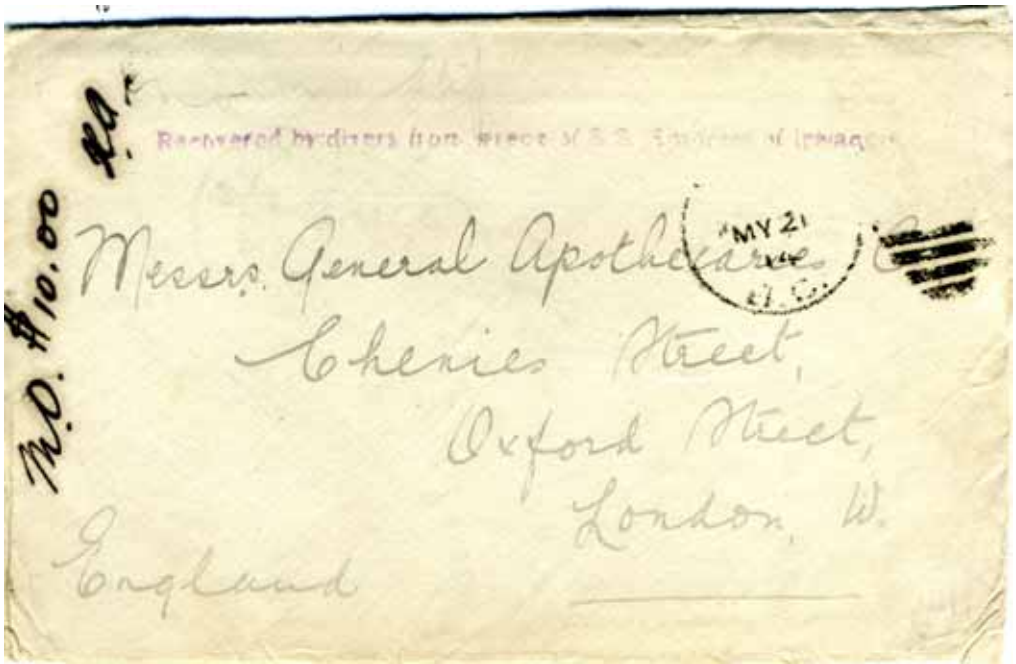
Red wax seal of the Superintendant of the Ottawa branch DLO (no other examples recorded).

Returned letter from the *Empress*

With *complimentary* registration, as the original letter (containing a money order for $10) was not sent as registered mail.



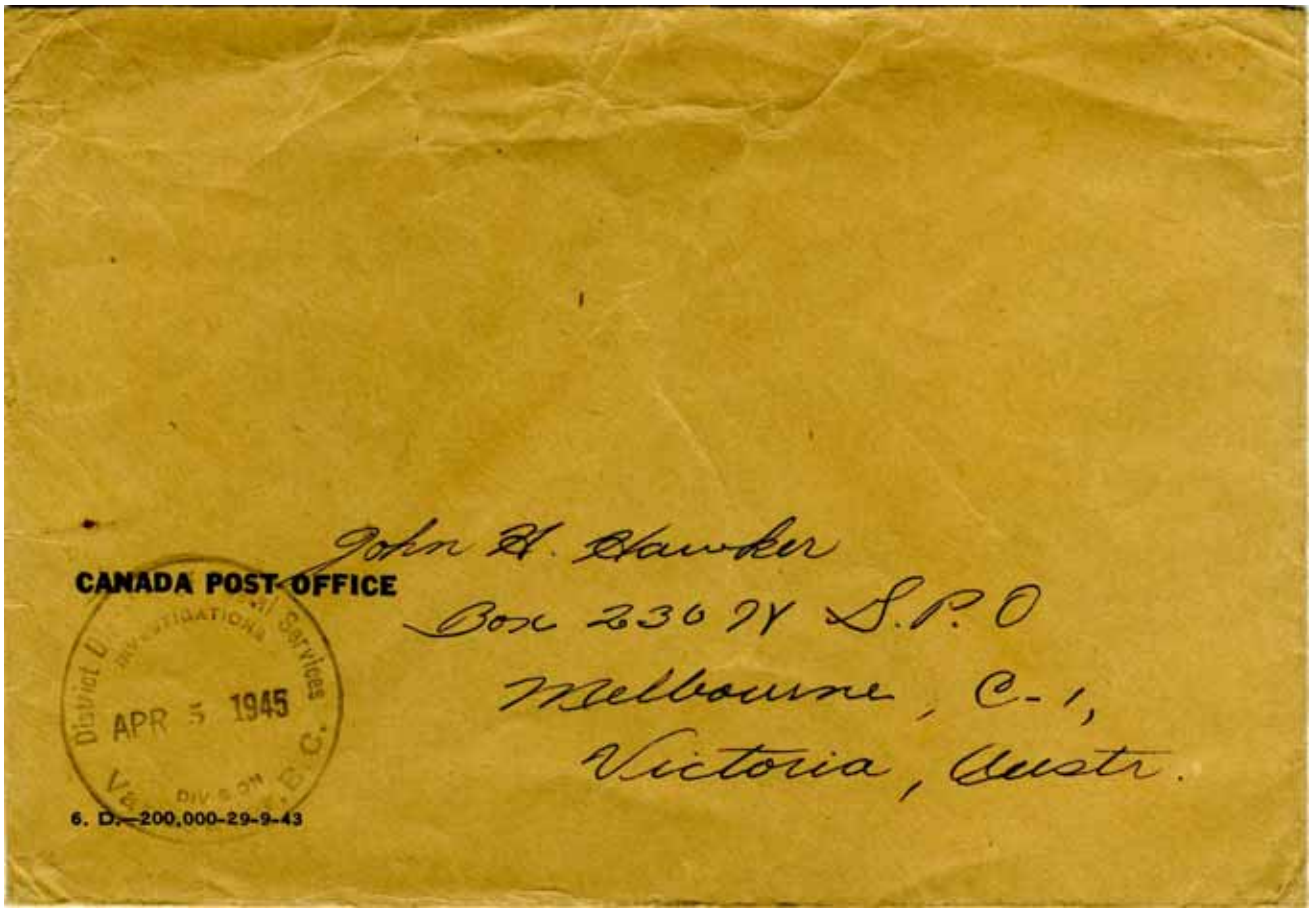
Returned to Vernon (BC) from Ottawa, 11 January 1915. Print data: 5 D.L. (A)—20,000–16-9-14. Returned as registered letter. Ottawa free datestamp. Enclosed cover below.



Enclosed letter mailed to London, 21 May 1915. Stamps came off after recovery, but before handstamp applied, and enclosed in envelope (2¢ pays Empire rate). Violet **Recovered by** . . . handstamp. Contained money order, hence was returned to sender via registered mail.

Wreck of the *Greenhill Park*

Destined for Australia with supplies, the *Greenhill Park* blew up in Vancouver harbour 6 March 1945 with eight deaths. At most ten covers were recovered, all oil-stained. This was forwarded to the *recipient* of the letter. The envelope had been folded to fit the covering envelope (crease 2mm from the right edge).

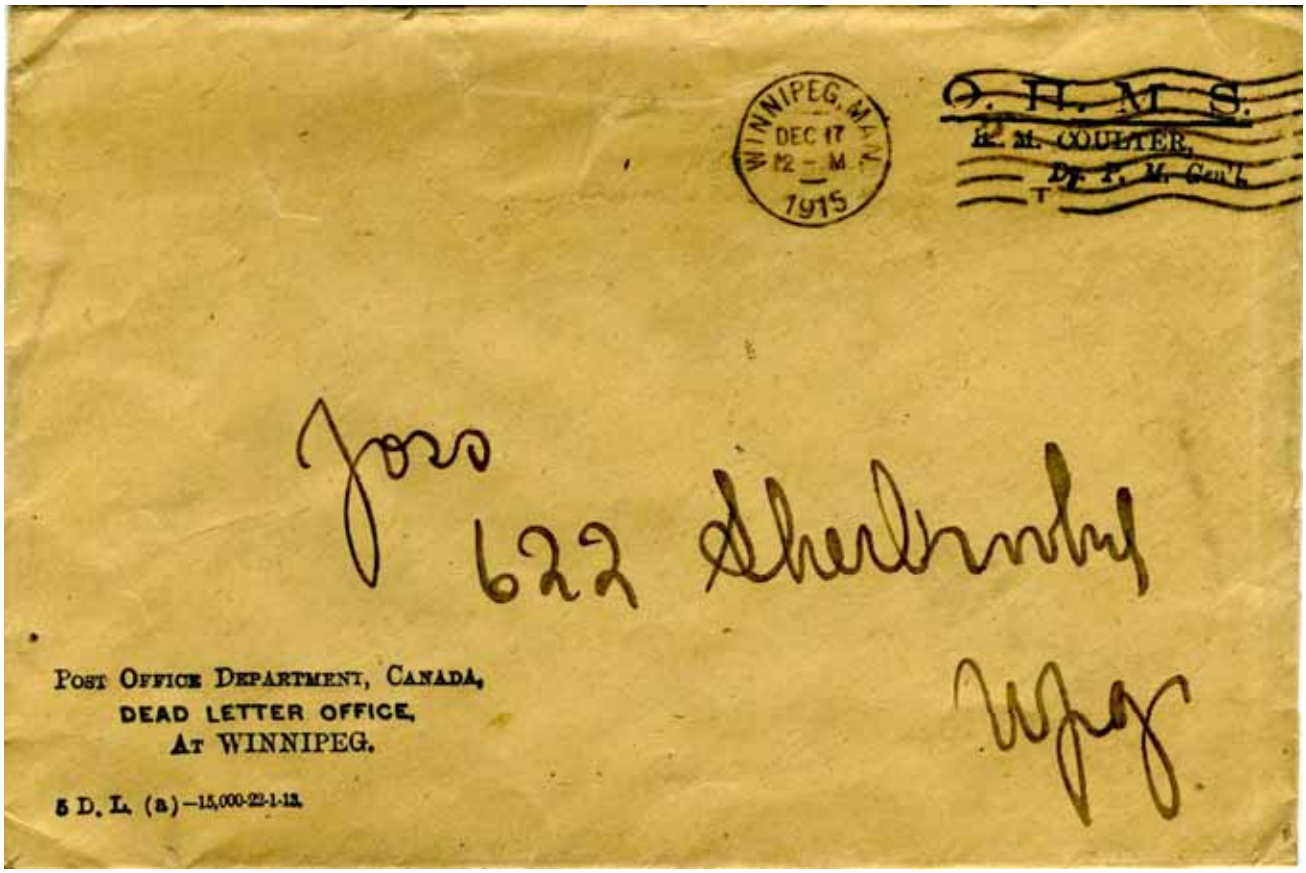


To original addressee in Melbourne, April 1945. Print data: 6 D—200,000–29-9-43. No charge. Enclosed:

US soldier's letter from Salina (*KS*) *to Melbourne,* 20 February 1945. Free mail from a soldier on active duty. Crude rubber handstamp applied in Vancouver.

Returned for war tax (with enclosure)

War tax (a flat 1¢ added to first class mail domestically, to the US, or to the UK) was introduced in April 1915. In case it was not prepaid, a notice would be sent to the sender, asking for the additional payment; if this was not received (which happened rarely), the letter would be returned to sender, as here.



Returned to Winnipeg from Winnipeg branch D L O, December 1915. Print data: 5 D.L. (A)—15,000–22-1-13.

Winnipeg to UK, December 1915. Turquoise RETURNED . . . handstamp

Returned soldiers' mail (enclosure)

Undeliverable letters addressed to active duty soldiers were returned by the D L O with no service fee.

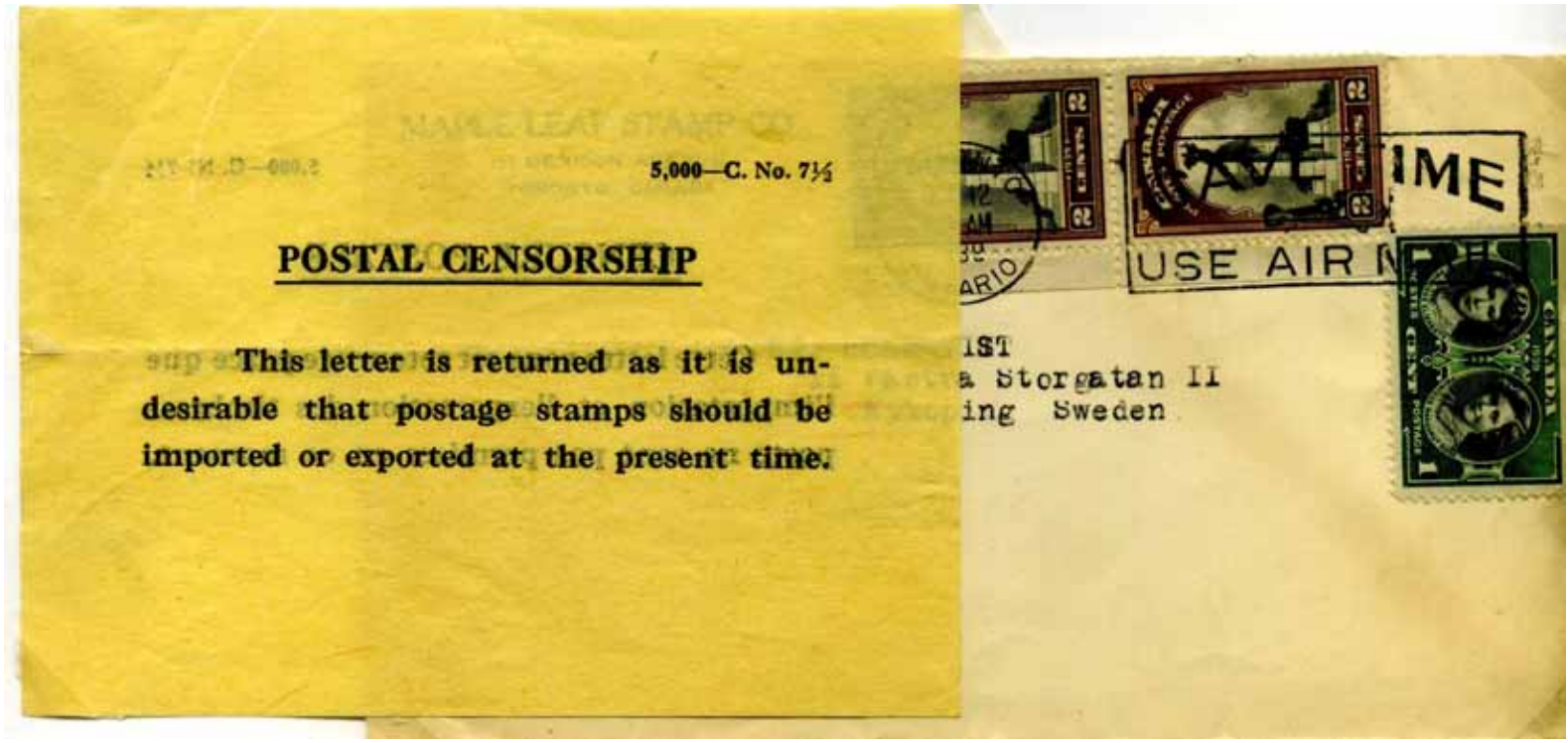
Returned to Perth (*ON*)*, forwarded to Kingston,* December 1917. Print data: 6 D.L. (A)—100,000–5-9-17. Ottawa *FREE* machine. Returned to mother of addressee. Enclosure below.

Lanark (*ON*) *to soldier in Candian Expeditionary Force, UK, deceased,* September 1917. Rectangular datestamp CANADIAN CONTINGENT / RECORD OFFICE / POSTAL RECD. Purple ms *Deceased* with initials and rank at left. Postage of 2¢ Empire rate and 1¢ war tax.

Postal censorship in World War II (enclosure)

Mailing postage stamps (for collectors) to a neutral country was not allowed during wartime. This is an early example (October 1939).

Returned to a stamp company in Toronto from Ottawa branch D L O, October 1939. Print data: 6 D—200,000–21-9-38. No charge. With free franked red meter, and dateless Ottawa D L O datestamp. Enclosure below.



To Sweden, with bilingual form, October 1939. Postage of 5¢, paying UPU rate. Letter was intercepted and sent to D L O before it left the country.

Postal service suspended (enclosure)

Denmark was occupied by the Nazis 9 April 1940.

Returned to a Prince George from Inspection Division of the D L O, May 1940. Print data: 6 D—200,000–21-9-38. No charge. With free franked red meter, and dateless Ottawa D L O datestamp. Enclosure below.

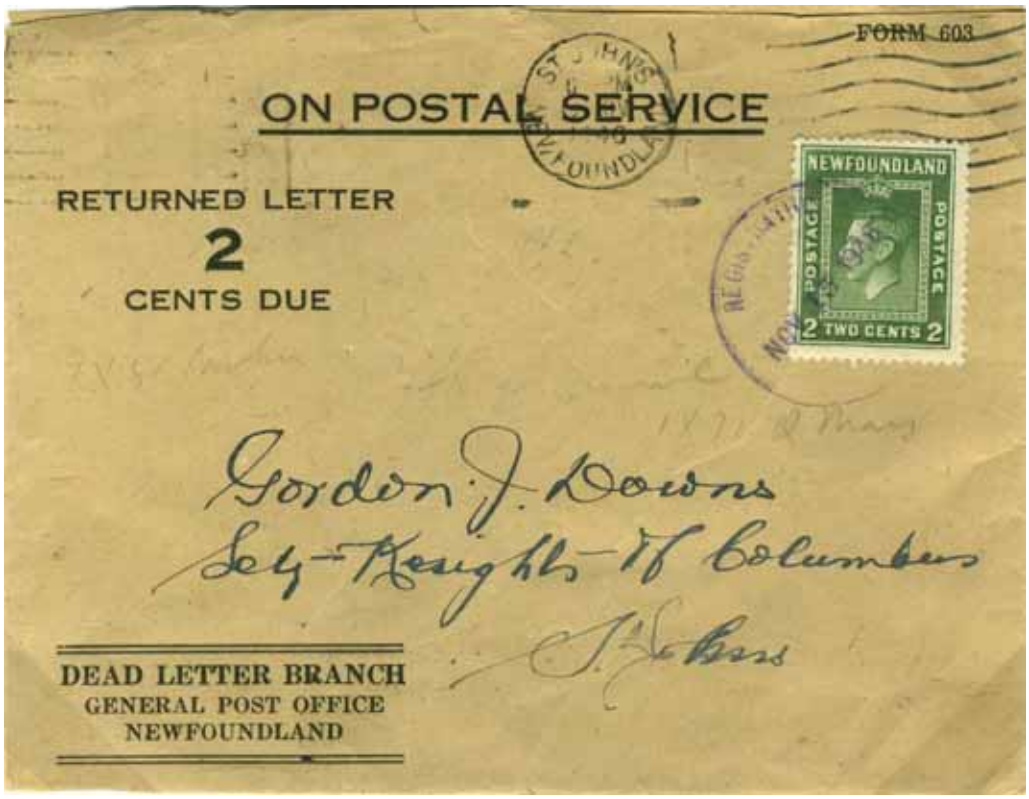
Mail service to Denmark suspended, May 1940. Postage of 5¢, paying UPU rate. Letter intercepted and sent to D L O before it left the country.

Pre-Confederation Newfoundland returned DLO covering envelopes (1941 & 1946)

Very few examples of Newfoundland D L O covering envelopes have been reported. Both are form 603; the later one was printed on cheaper paper, owing to wartime scarcity.

Although five years apart, these were addressed by the same clerk.

Double enclosure, returned to St John's, October 1941. 4¢ in postage due stamps, indicating double return.



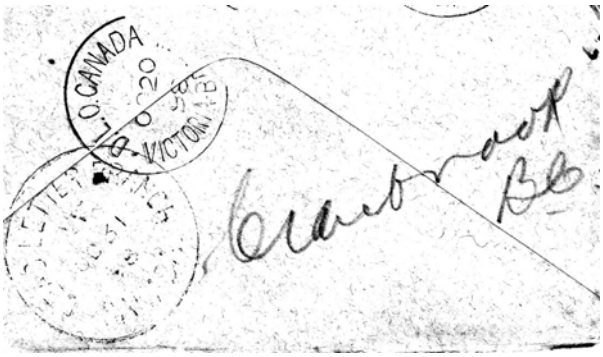
Single enclosure, St John's, November 1946. Fee (2¢) paid by definitive; stamp cancelled by rubber registration handstamp, presumably the first one that came to hand.

Foreign DLO covering envelopes

If a letter to Canada from abroad could not be delivered and the return address was not visible, it would be sent to the DLO; there, either it would be opened and placed in a covering envelope, or it would simply be sent to country of origin, whose postal service would now use their own covering envelope to return it to sender.

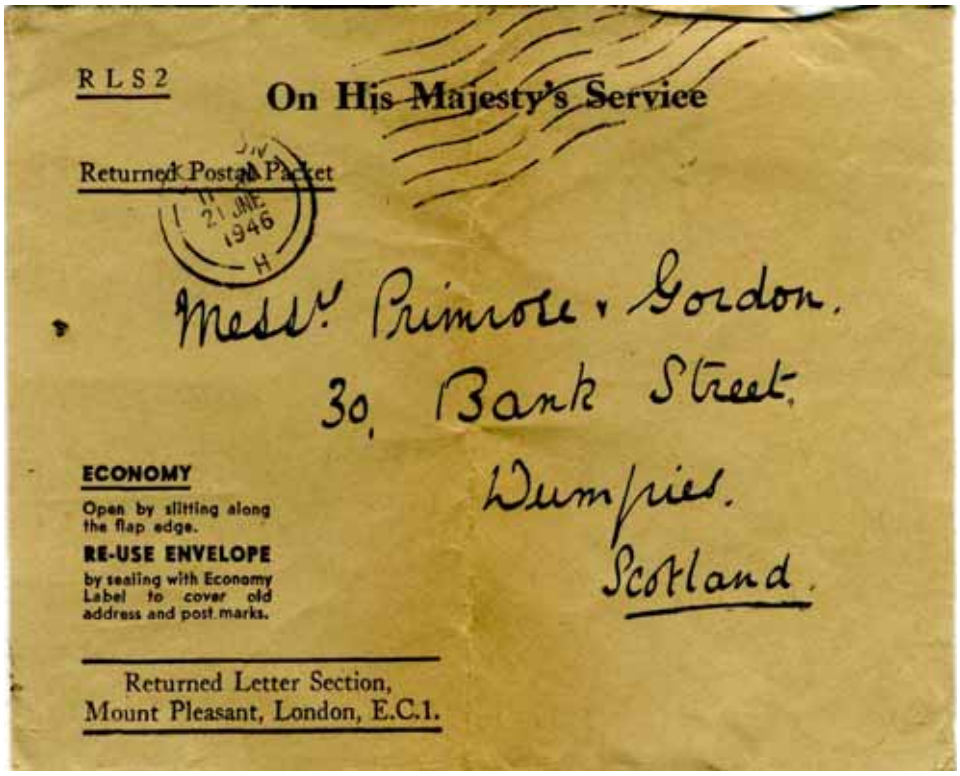
Returned to UK, enclosure (1898)

Returned to Derby from BC, November 1898. British returned postal packet of the Returned Letter Office. No charge. Enclosure below.



Derby to the CPR contractor at Crows Nest Pass, forwarded to Cranbrook (BC), June 1898. Postage of 2½d, paying UPU rate. NOT·CALLED·FOR, and sent to Victoria branch DLO (a very early strike), from there to Ottawa DLO (faint purple).

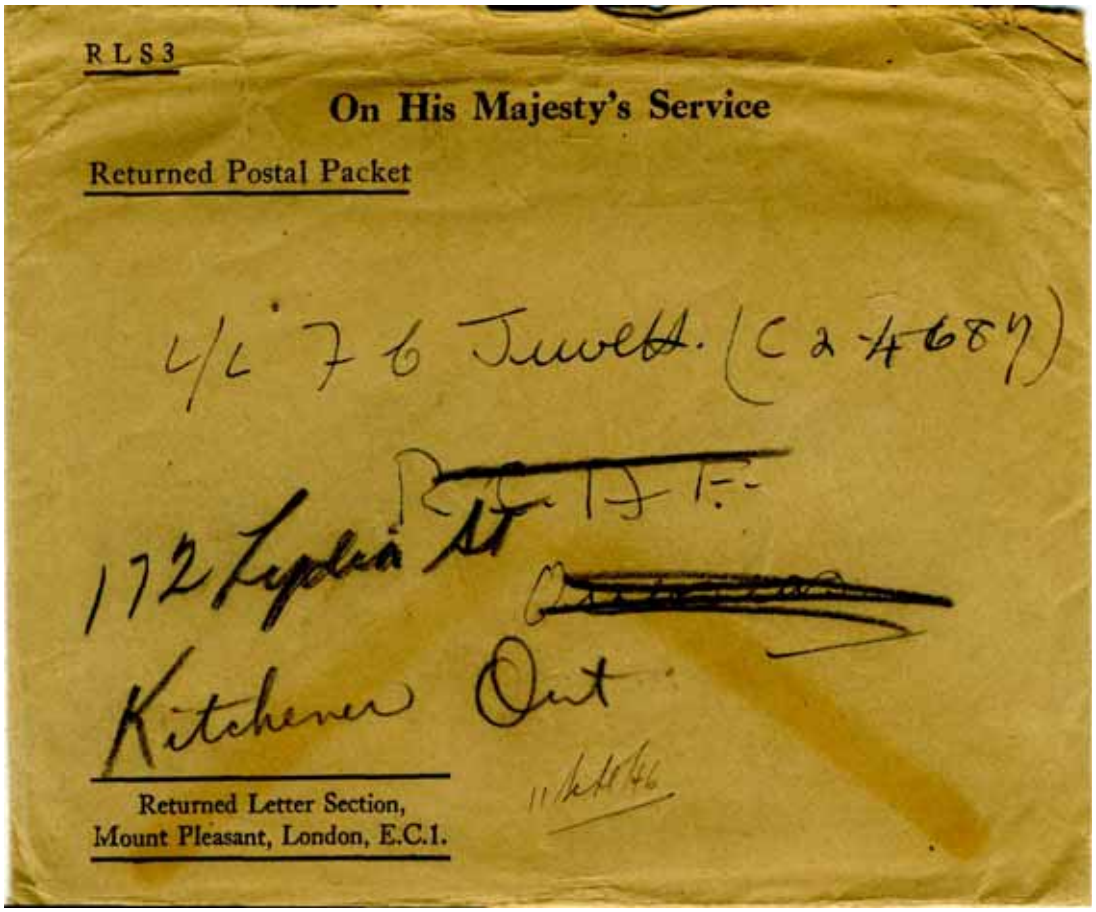
Returned to UK, deceased *and* died (1946)



Returned to Scotland from Vancouver, June 1946. British returned postal packet of the Returned Letter Section. No charge. Enclosure below.

Dumfries to Vancouver, March 1946. Postage of 2½d, paying UPU rate. Ms *Deceased,* and in different handwriting, *Died 1/8/43.* Sent to Ottawa branch DLO.

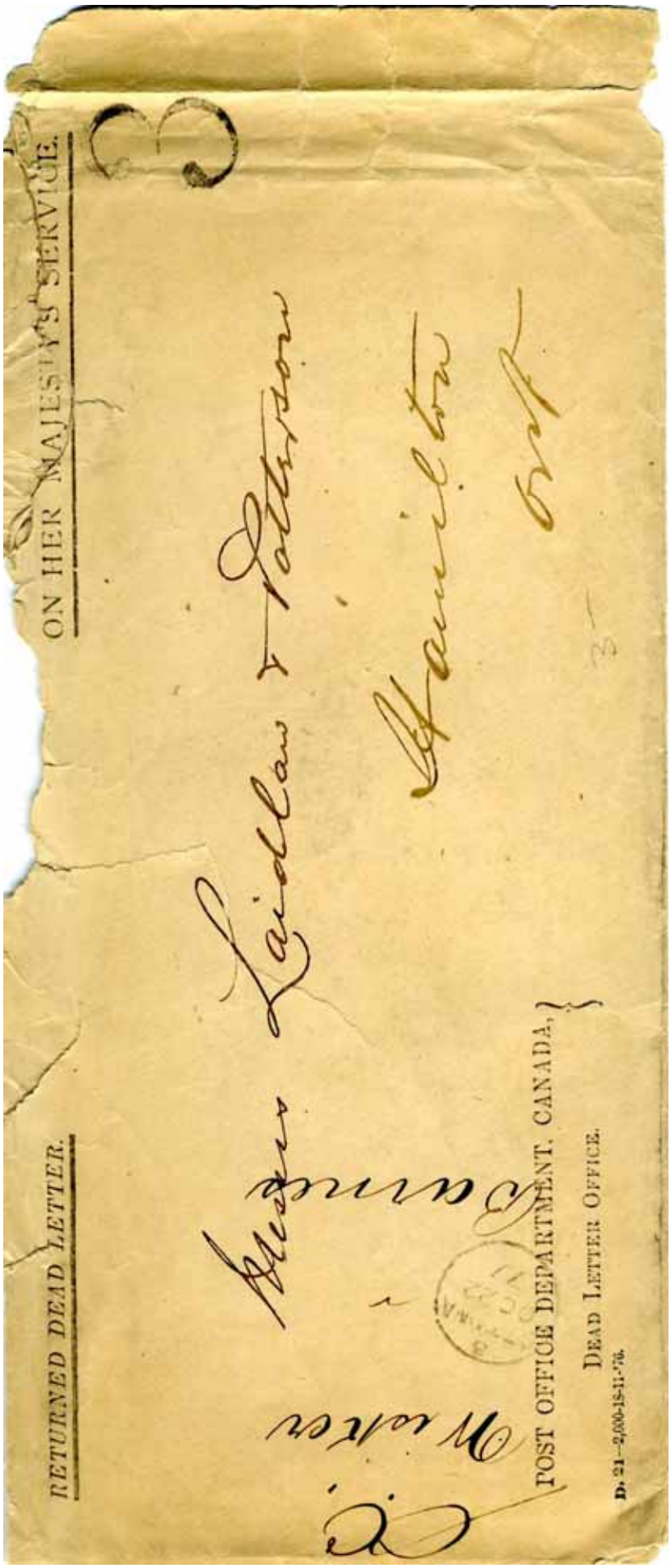
Returned to Canada from New Zealand via UK (1946)



Returned to RCAF Ottawa, forwarded to Kitchener, August 1946. British returned postal packet of the Returned Letter Section. No charge. In Ottawa, the datestamp at right was applied. Enclosure below.

British FPO, Bournemouth, to New Zealand, returned to UK, January 1946. Postage of 2½d (UPU rate). Hs DIRECTORY SEARCH and NOT FOUND applied at Christchurch. Returned to UK. Contained RCAF greeting card.

The following pages didn't make the cut



Large covering envelope, D21 (1877)

Very small print run (2000)

Returned to Hamilton, October 1877. Print data: D. 21—2,000-18-11-'76. On flap:

The enclosed Dead Letter is returned by direction of the Postmaster General t
reason thereon assigned.

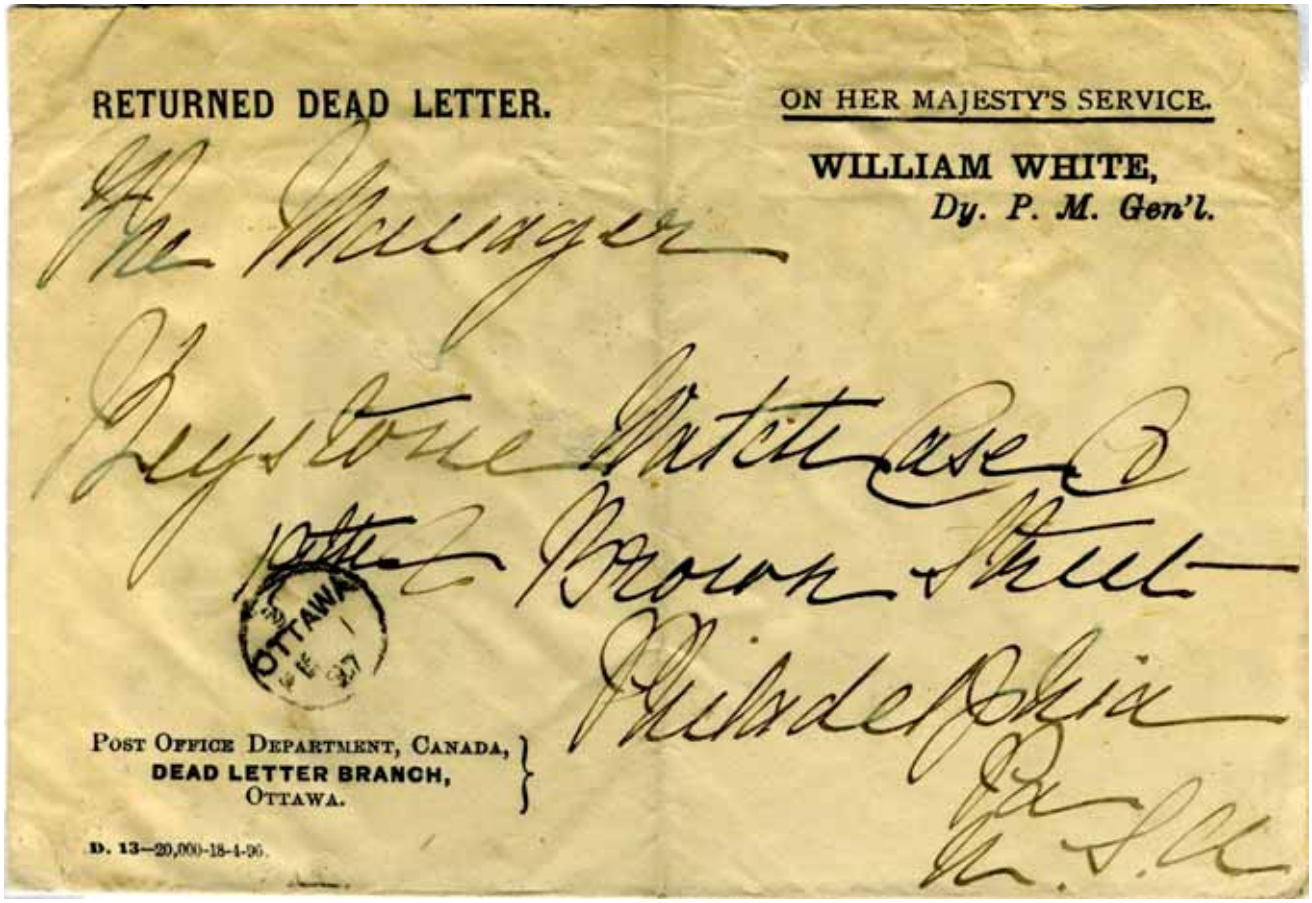
Different large format (free)

Returned to Winnipeg, free, July 1888. Print data: D. 12.—5,000-5-5-84. Four-year gap between printing and use, suggesting this form envelope was seldom needed.

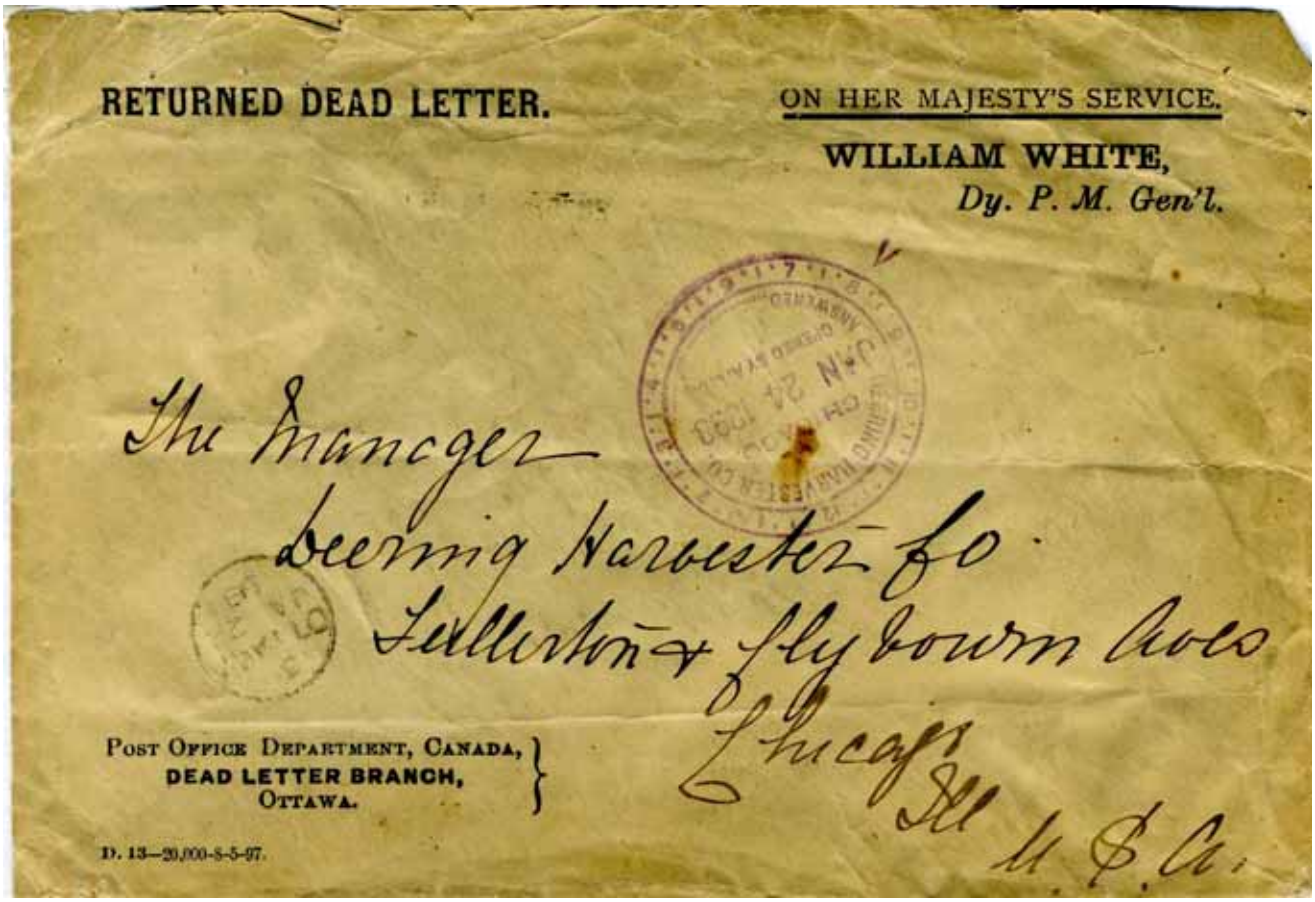
Backstamped at Winnipeg, 27 July 1888.

Standard D L O incantation on reverse.

Returned to the US (1897 & 1898)

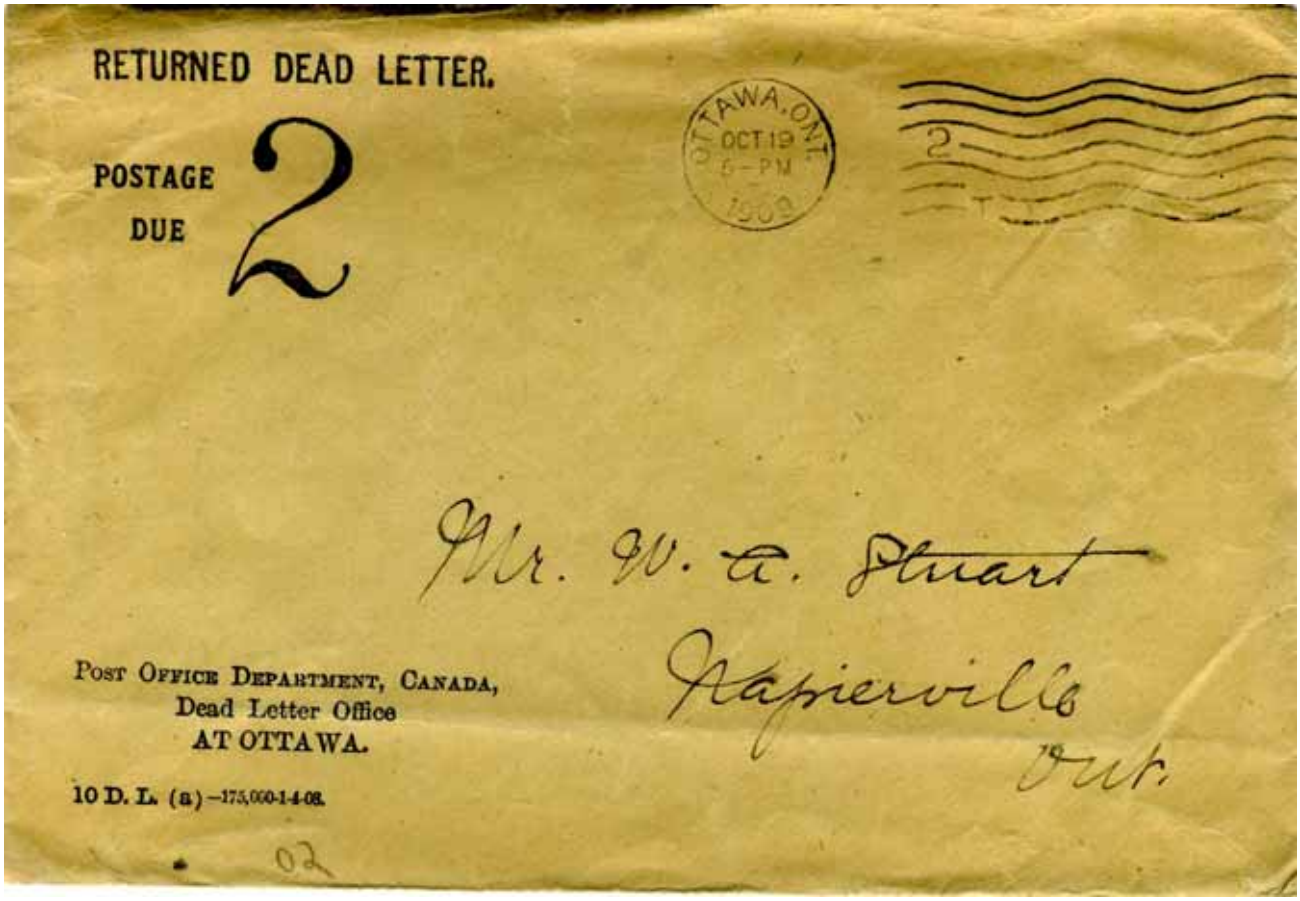


Returned to Los Angeles itself misaddressed, February 1897. Print data: D. 13—20,000–18-4-96.

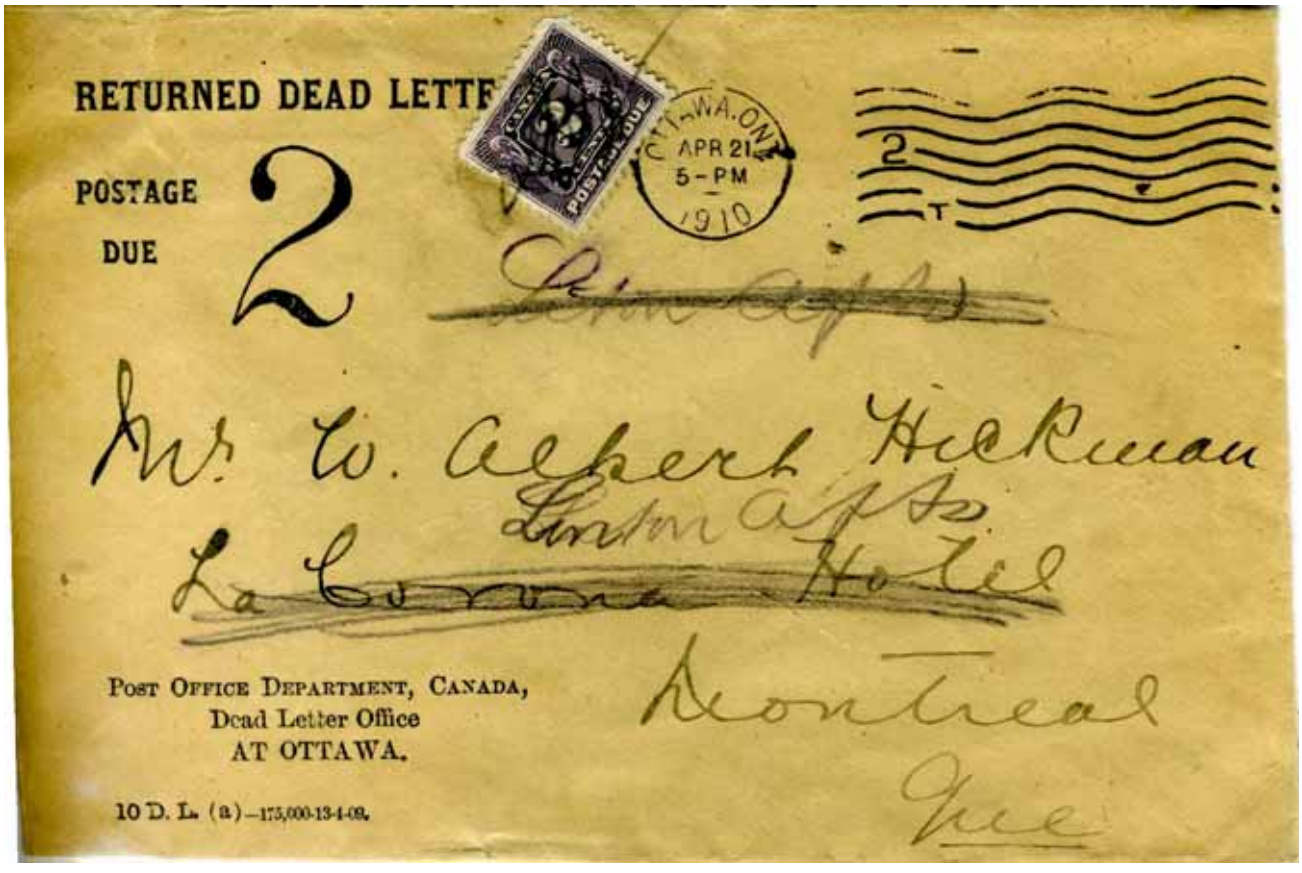


Returned to Chicago, October 1894. Print data: D. 13—20,000–8-5-97. Company receiver.

With and without postage due stamps (1909 & 1910)

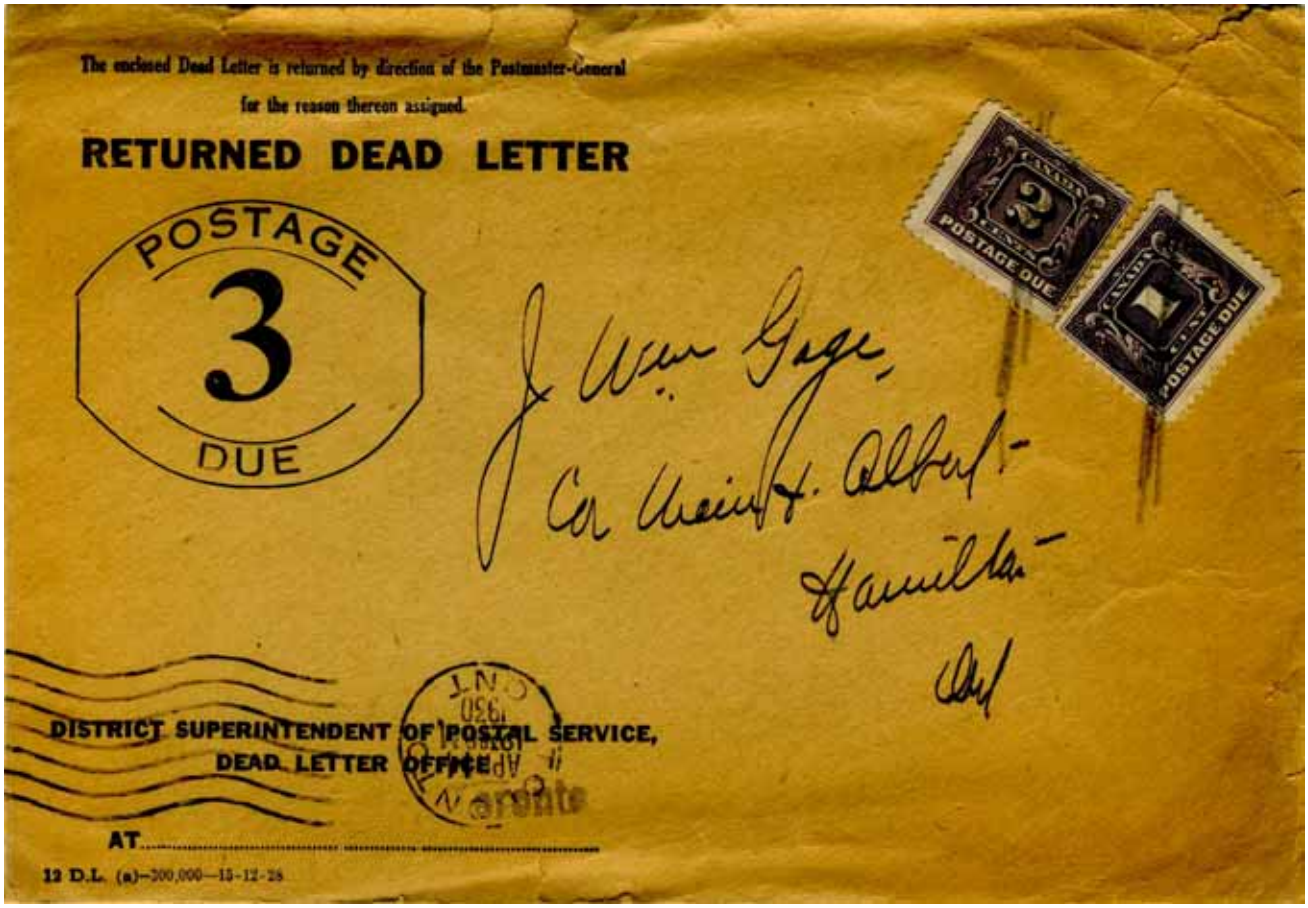


Returned to Napierville (*ON*) *from Ottawa,* October 1909. Print data: 10 D.L. (A)—175,000–1-4-08. 2¢ fee.



Returned to Montreal from Ottawa, April 1910. 10 D.L. (A)—175,000–13-4-09. Charged 2¢.

Returned with enclosure (1930)



Returned to Hamilton from Toronto branch D L O, April 1930. Print data: 12 D.L. (A)—300,000–15-12-28. Charged 3¢ for return service.

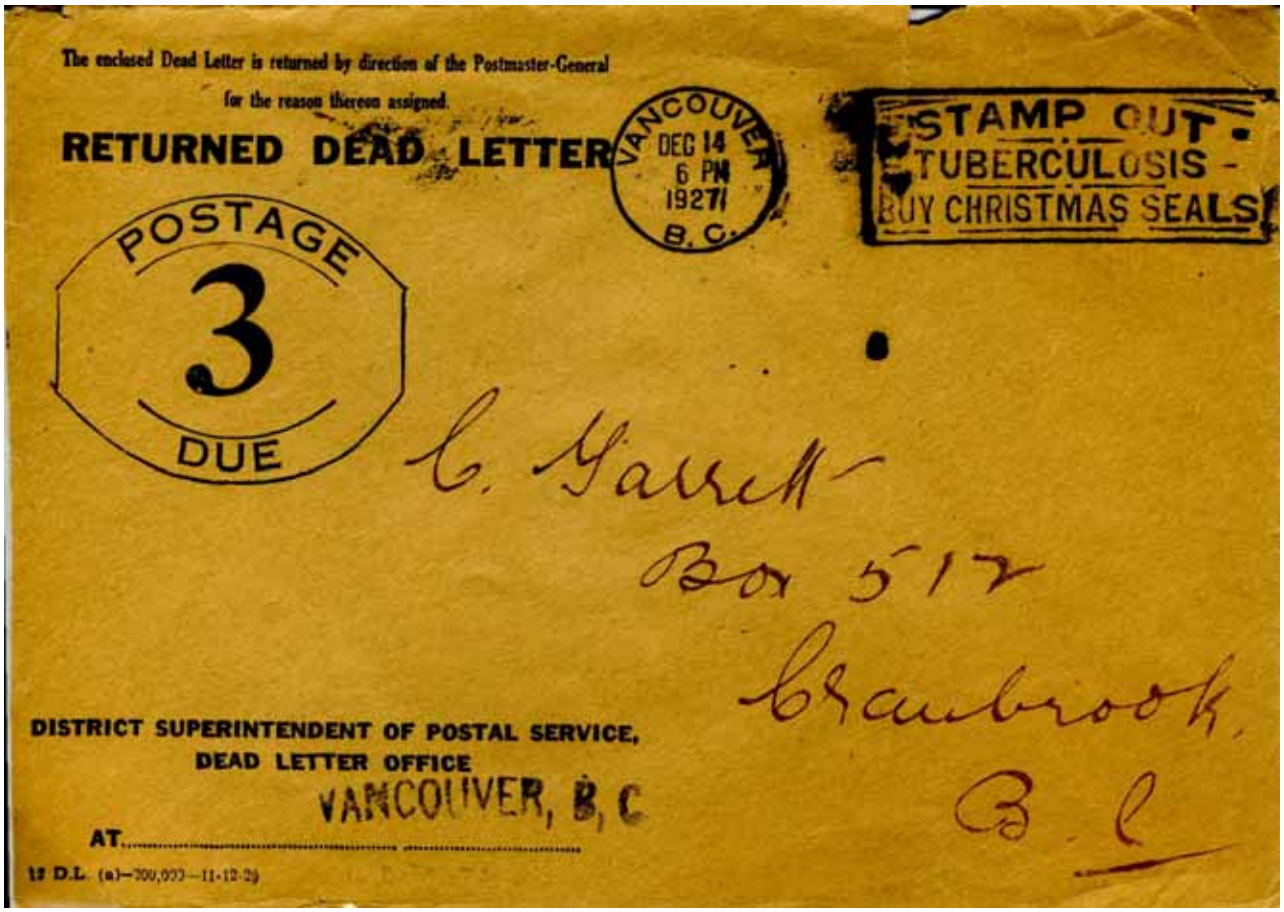
Two different Toronto District Postal Superintendent datestamps.

Hamilton drop letter, April 1930. With large purple numbered rubber Hamilton handstamp applied when forwarding to D L O. Postage pays 2¢ drop letter rate.

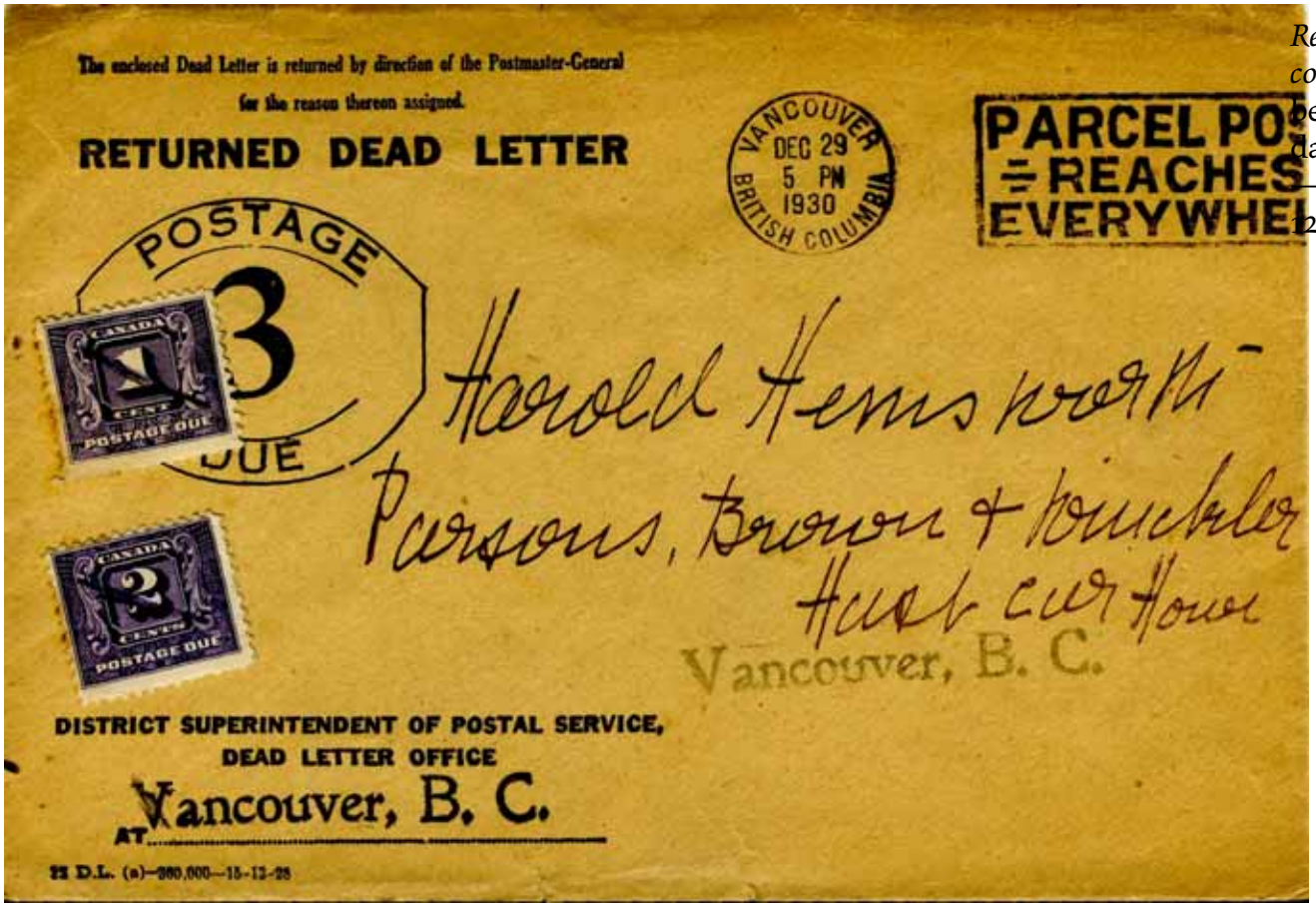
Enclosed letter was a receipt for a mortgage payment; it must have been subsequently abandoned.

Vancouver branch dead letter office

Opened 1902.



Returned to Cranbrook (BC) from Vancouver branch, December 1927. Print data: 12 D.L. (A)—200,000–11-12-26. Generic form envelope with dot leader for branch. Charged 3¢ return service fee.



Returned to Vancouver, December 1930. Print data: 22 D.L. (A)—200,000–15-12-28.

With extra postage due (1937)

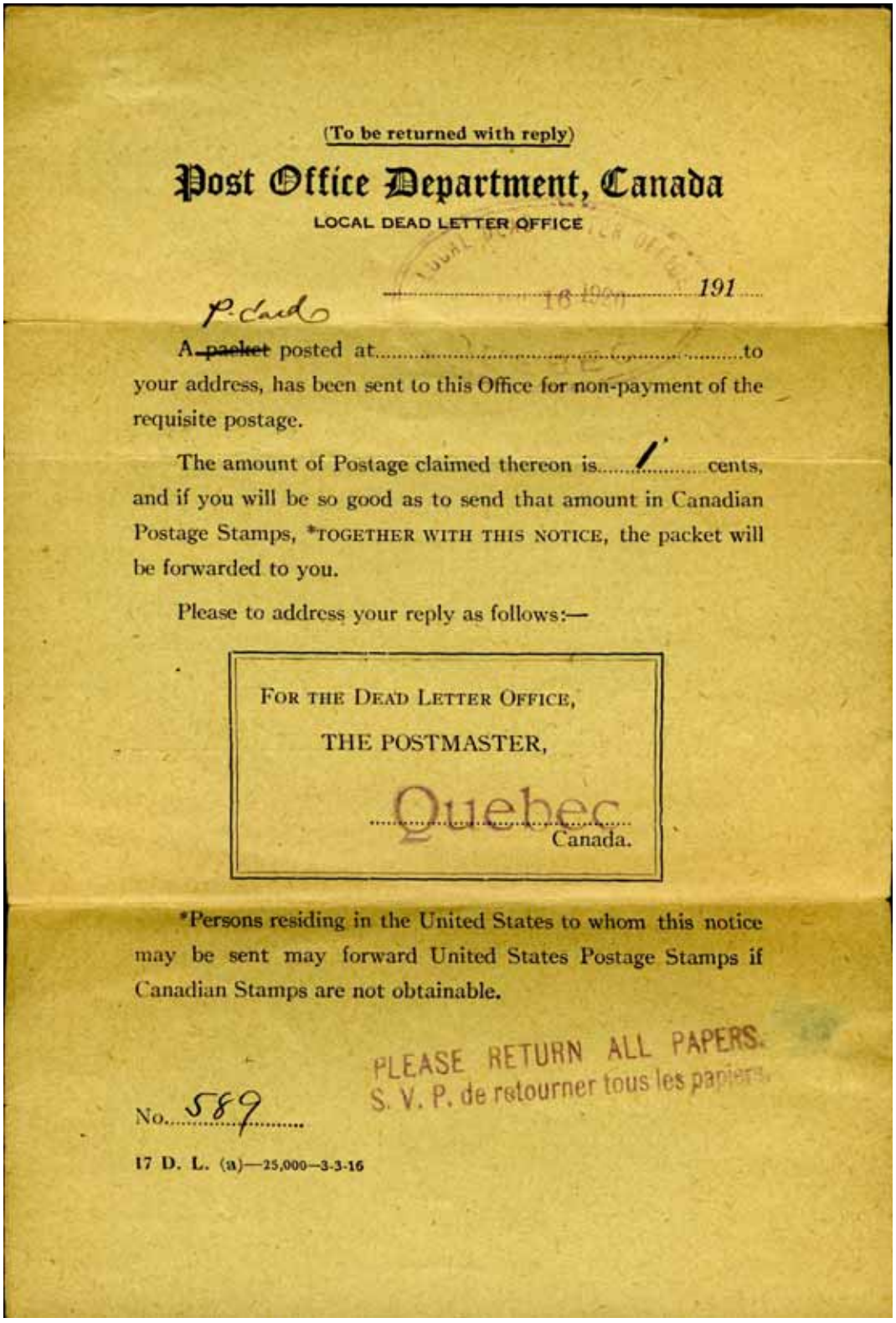
Returned to Oakville from Inspection's Service, Ottawa, February 1938. Print data: 5D—200,000–22-7-37. Charged 9¢ total; likely made up of double deficiency domestic rate (3¢ × 2) and 3¢ return service charge.

Returned with enclosure (1947)

Returned to Winnipeg from Toronto branch D L O, March 1947. Print data: 5D—260,000–5-2-47. Charged 3¢ for return service.

Winnipeg to Toronto, March 1947. With large purple **NOT FOUND**, and on reverse, Toronto district D L O rubber datestamp. Postage pays 2¢ drop letter rate.

Due form to US, Quebec local DLO (1920)



(To be returned with reply)

Post Office Department, Canada

LOCAL DEAD LETTER OFFICE

..... 191....

P. Card

A ~~packet~~ posted at.....to your address, has been sent to this Office for non-payment of the requisite postage.

The amount of Postage claimed thereon is.....1'.....cents, and if you will be so good as to send that amount in Canadian Postage Stamps, *TOGETHER WITH THIS NOTICE, the packet will be forwarded to you.

Please to address your reply as follows:—

FOR THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE,
THE POSTMASTER,
Quebec
Canada.

*Persons residing in the United States to whom this notice may be sent may forward United States Postage Stamps if Canadian Stamps are not obtainable.

PLEASE RETURN ALL PAPERS.
S. V. P. de retourner tous les papiers.

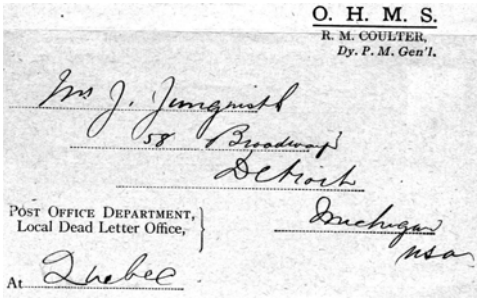
No. 589

17 D. L. (a)—25,000—3-3-16

Folded letter sheet to Detroit from Quebec local D L O, August 1920.
Print data:
17 D.L. (A)—25,000-3-3-16.

Due 1¢ for a post card.

LOCAL DEAD LETTER OFFICE
QUEBEC
purple oval datestamp.



O. H. M. S.
R. M. COULTER,
Dy. P. M. Gen'l.

Mrs J. Jungnitsch
58 Broadway
Detroit
Michigan
USA

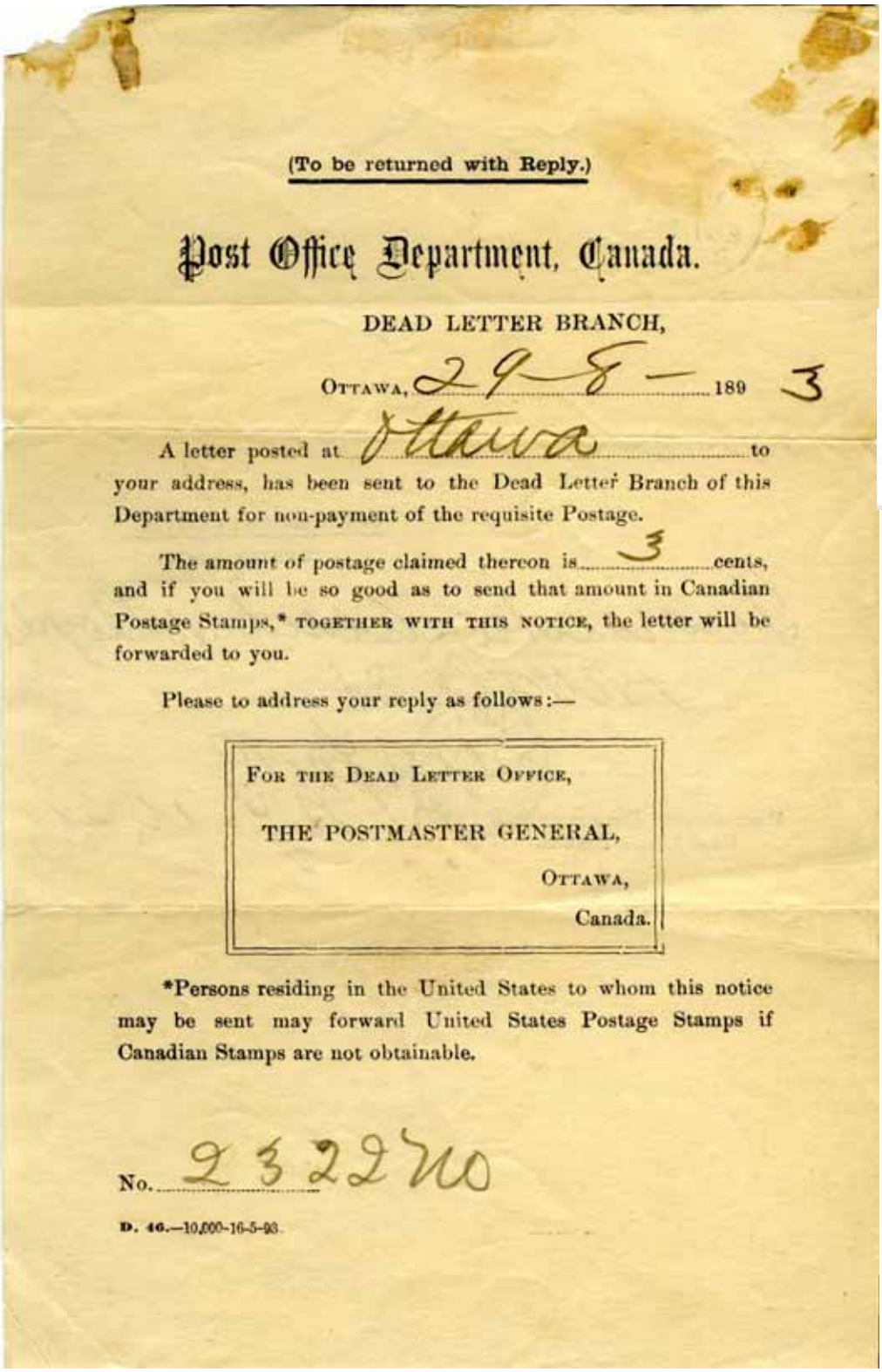
POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
Local Dead Letter Office,
At Quebec

No postmarks on outside.

Due forms

Normally, if an item was mailed with postage due, the sender would be informed and asked to send the extra postage, which would be applied by the post office. If no return address was visible, the cover would be sent to the DLO, from where a *notice to the intended recipient* would be sent, asking for payment of the required postage. (US stamps were permissible if the recipient was in the US.) The following pages show the corresponding folded letter sheets.

To US (1893)



(To be returned with Reply.)

Post Office Department, Canada.

DEAD LETTER BRANCH,

OTTAWA, 29-8- 1893

A letter posted at Ottawa to your address, has been sent to the Dead Letter Branch of this Department for non-payment of the requisite Postage.

The amount of postage claimed thereon is 3 cents, and if you will be so good as to send that amount in Canadian Postage Stamps,* TOGETHER WITH THIS NOTICE, the letter will be forwarded to you.

Please to address your reply as follows:—

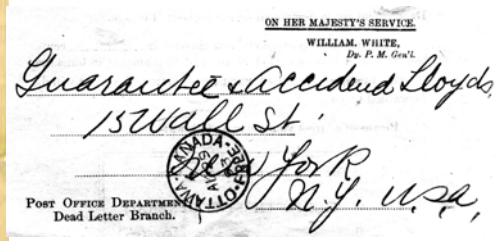
FOR THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE,
THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,
OTTAWA,
Canada.

*Persons residing in the United States to whom this notice may be sent may forward United States Postage Stamps if Canadian Stamps are not obtainable.

No. 232210

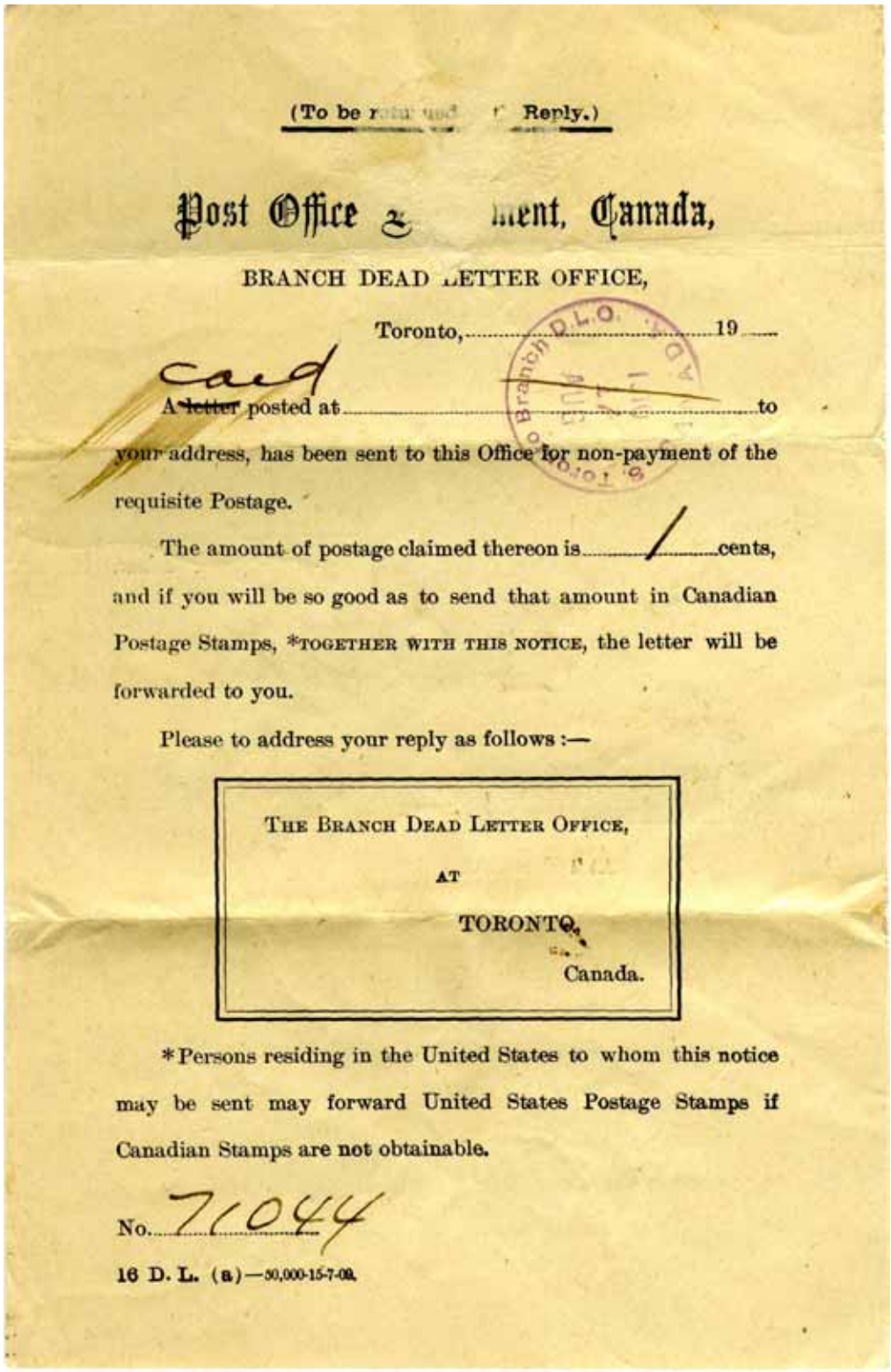
D. 46.—10,000-16-5-93.

Folded letter sheet to New York, August 1893. Print data: D. 46—10,000-16-5-93. File number (at bottom) used by the DLO to identify the envelope for which postage was paid.



Datestamp OTTAWA·CANADA FREE

Due form to US, Toronto branch (1910)



(To be r[illegible] Reply.)

Post Office [illegible]ment, Canada,

BRANCH DEAD LETTER OFFICE,

Toronto, ... 19 ....

A ~~letter~~ card posted at ..... to your address, has been sent to this Office for non-payment of the requisite Postage.

The amount of postage claimed thereon is ..... 1 ..... cents, and if you will be so good as to send that amount in Canadian Postage Stamps, *TOGETHER WITH THIS NOTICE, the letter will be forwarded to you.

Please to address your reply as follows :—

THE BRANCH DEAD LETTER OFFICE,
AT
TORONTO,
Canada.

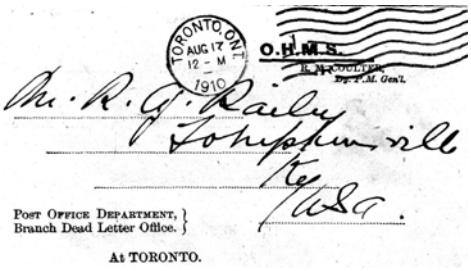
*Persons residing in the United States to whom this notice may be sent may forward United States Postage Stamps if Canadian Stamps are not obtainable.

No. 71044

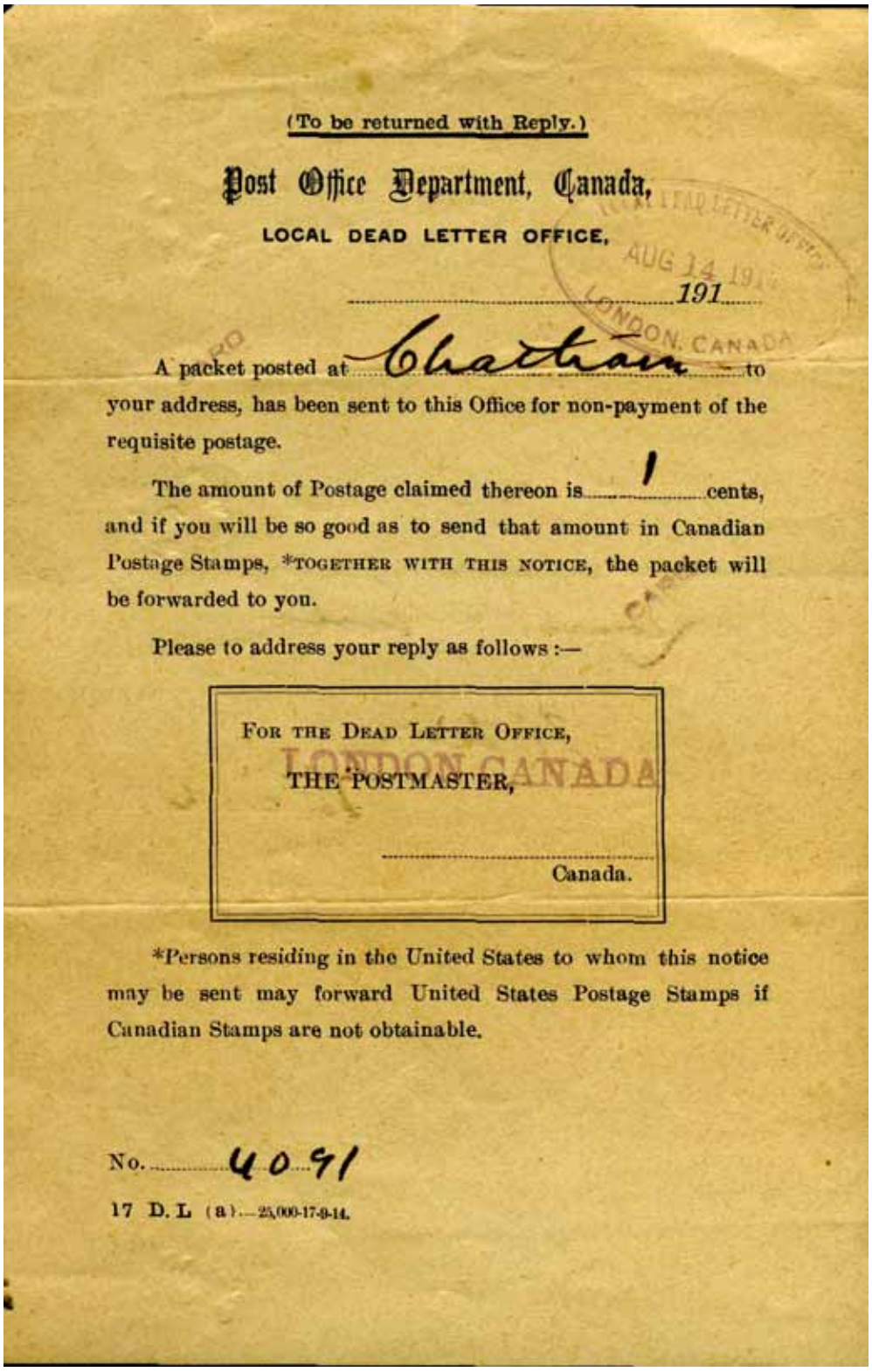
16 D. L. (a)—50,000-15-7-09.

Folded letter sheet to Kentucky from Toronto branch D L O, August 1910.
Print data:
16 D.L. (A)—15,000-15-7-09.
A mere 1¢ was due, for which the recipient had to spend an additional 2¢ to mail it to the D L O.

8. Toronto Branch D.L.O. / CANADA (purple rubber) has date inverted.



Due form to US, London local DLO (1917)



(To be returned with Reply.)

Post Office Department, Canada,

LOCAL DEAD LETTER OFFICE,

LOCAL DEAD LETTER OFFICE AUG 14 1917 LONDON, CANADA

191

A packet posted at Chatham to your address, has been sent to this Office for non-payment of the requisite postage.

The amount of Postage claimed thereon is 1 cents, and if you will be so good as to send that amount in Canadian Postage Stamps, *TOGETHER WITH THIS NOTICE, the packet will be forwarded to you.

Please to address your reply as follows :—

FOR THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE,
THE POSTMASTER,
LONDON CANADA
Canada.

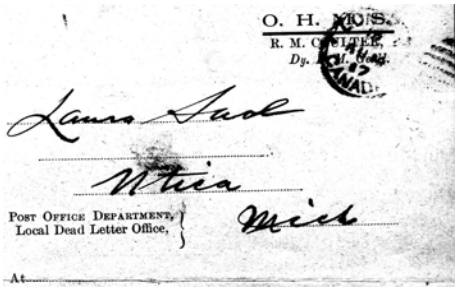
*Persons residing in the United States to whom this notice may be sent may forward United States Postage Stamps if Canadian Stamps are not obtainable.

No. 4091

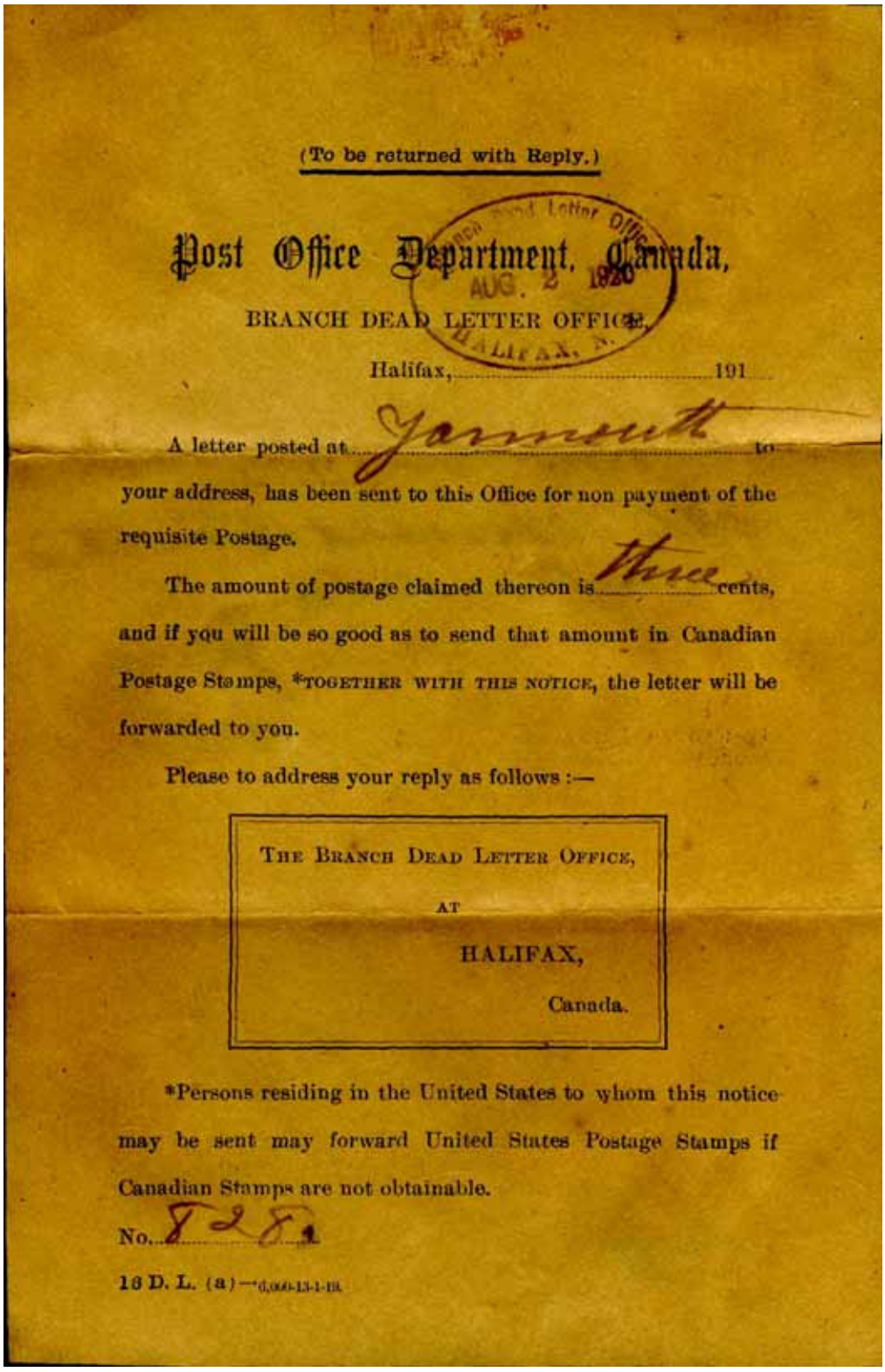
17 D.L (a)—25,000-17-9-14.

Folded letter sheet to Utica (MI) from London local DLO, August 1917. Print data:
17 D.L. (A)—25,000-17-9-14.
Due 1¢.

LOCAL DEAD LETTER OFFICE
LONDON, CANADA
purple oval datestamp. Purple handstamp CARD (that is, post card) appears twice, cancelling the word *packet.*



Due form to US, Halifax branch (1920)



(To be returned with Reply.)

Post Office Department, Canada,

BRANCH DEAD LETTER OFFICE,

Halifax, 191

A letter posted at Yarmouth to your address, has been sent to this Office for non payment of the requisite Postage.

The amount of postage claimed thereon is three cents, and if you will be so good as to send that amount in Canadian Postage Stamps, *TOGETHER WITH THIS NOTICE, the letter will be forwarded to you.

Please to address your reply as follows :—

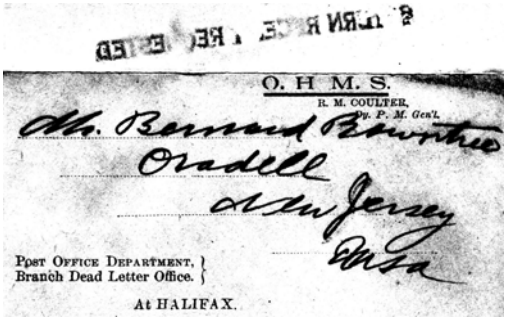
THE BRANCH DEAD LETTER OFFICE,
AT
HALIFAX,
Canada.

*Persons residing in the United States to whom this notice may be sent may forward United States Postage Stamps if Canadian Stamps are not obtainable.

No. 8281

13 D. L. (a)—6,000-13-1-19.

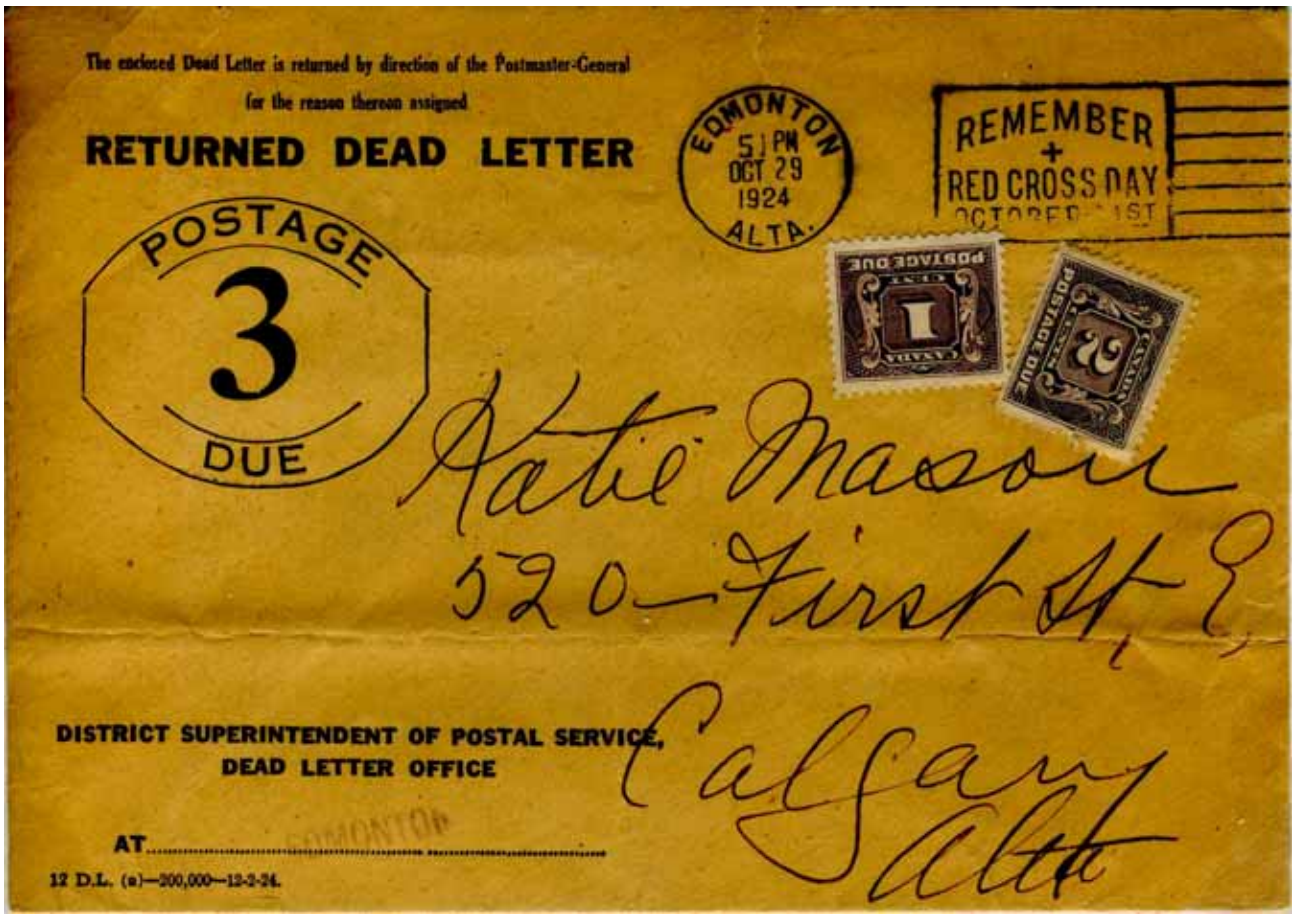
Folded letter sheet to New Jersey from Halifax branch D L O, August 1920.
Print data:
13 D.L. (A)—6,000-13-1-19.
Letter mailed from Yarmouth (NS).
Due 3¢.
Branch Dead Letter Office. / HALIFAX, N.S. purple rubber datestamp.



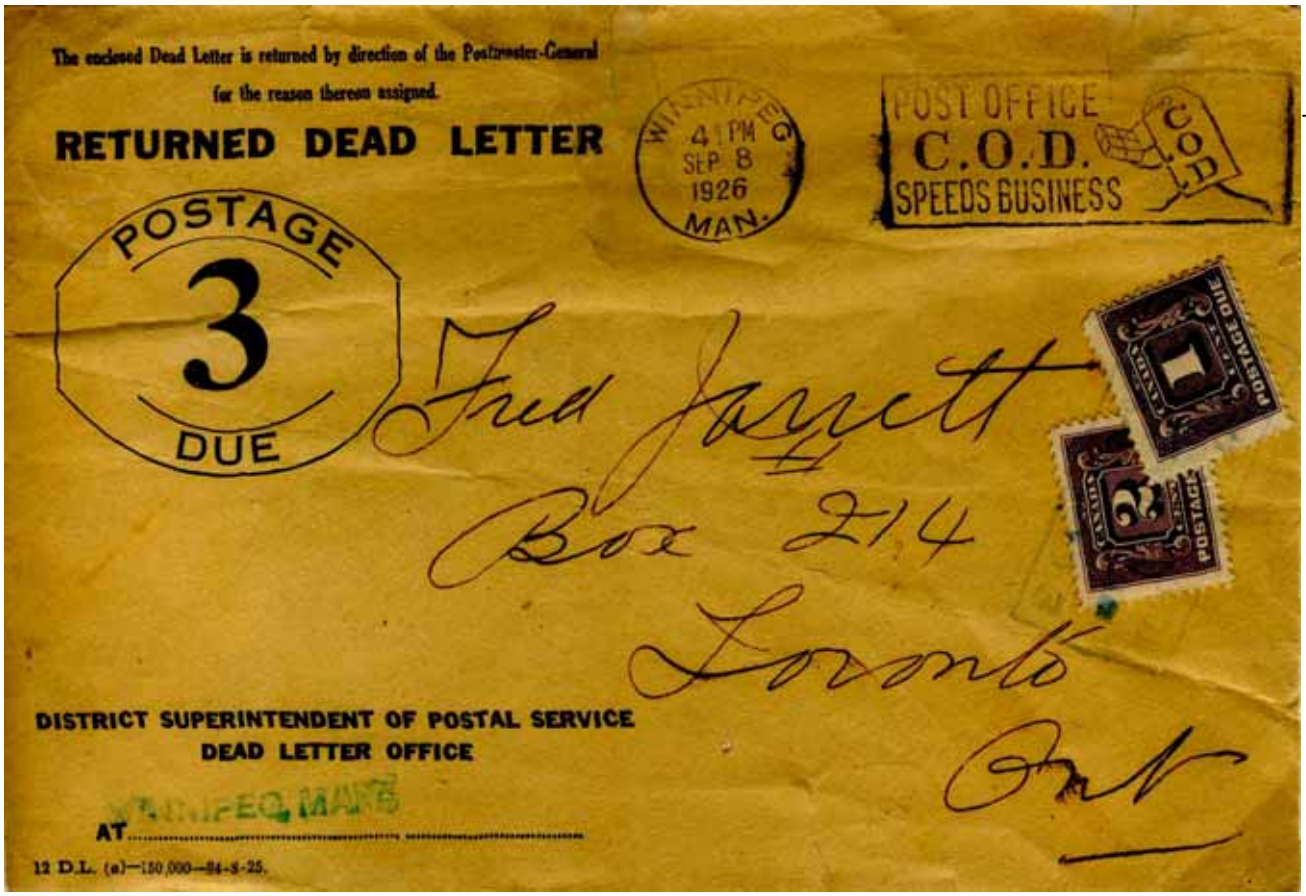
Curious offset of RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED a term used in the US to denote AR (*avis de réception*).

Edmonton & Winnipeg branch offices (1924 & 1926)

Returned letter covering envelopes are difficult to find from Edmonton.



Returned to Calgary from Edmonton, October 1924. Print data: 12 D.L. (A)—200,000–12-2-24. Generic form envelope with printed rate; 3¢ service charge. Slogan is somewhat scarce.



Returned to Fred Jarrett from Winnipeg, September 1926. Print data: 12 D.L. (A)—150,000–24-8-25. Postage due stamps cancelled by Toronto General Delivery handstamps.